KNIGHTS IN FUSTIAN

BY

CAROLINE BROWN

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KNIGHTS IN FUSTIAN

A War Time Story of Indiana

BY

CAROLINE BROWN

"I must become a borrower of the night
For a dark hour or twain."

SHAKESPEARE



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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Dedicated to

THE MEMORY OF OLIVER PERRY MORTON

THE GREAT WAR GOVERNOR, PATRIOT AND
STATESMAN; A MIGHTY INSTRUMENT
IN THE SALVATION OF HIS
COUNTRY

603007

PREFACE

WHILE presenting the romantic and tragic sides of the situation with which this story deals, the author has not strayed from the truth, but has used the romancer's privilege of gathering into a narrative facts from many sources. Except in those chapters dealing with sentiment, — as common in times of storm and stress as in tranquillity and safety, — every incident is founded on facts, which were either actual experiences of the author's kith and kin, or else the observation of eye-witnesses. But by far the most important part was gleaned from the record of the treason trials, as reported and published by Benn Pitman, the official stenographer; and wherever the ritual of the order is quoted, it is taken from this report. Material was also collected from Greeley's "American Conflict," Barnes's "History of the United States," three different lives of Governor Morton, and the files of the "Indianapolis Journal" for 1863 and 1864.

History slurs over the proceedings of the

Knights of the Golden Circle as a matter of little moment; and we of a later generation can hardly credit the extent of the organization, and the heinousness of its aims, which included crime and the disruption of the Union. Yet Governor Morton managed to keep every act of these Knights under surveillance. "There was not a moment," says Dudley Foulke, "in which they were not held securely in the grip of the war governor of Indiana." Quietly and firmly he broke up the organization by arresting the leaders, and prevented an uprising which, if successful, would have told very seriously on the outcome of the war. Six men who were the leaders of the order in Indiana were tried before a military commission and found guilty of treason, but were pardoned by Mr. Johnson, after the assassination of President Lincoln, through the intercession of Governor Morton himself.

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KNIGHTS IN FUSTIAN

CHAPTER I

THE QUILTING AT MRS. BOWLES'S

A SCORE of women were seated down the long sides of a gaudy calico quilt set up in frames in Mrs. Sarah Bowles's best room. They were sewing on it with more or less skill and with lagging industry amid the hum of voices, subdued to a much softer key than was usual with them; and they were indulging in such mild gossip as the rural community in which they lived had furnished.

The hostess sat at one end of the frames, and kept an austere eye on her guests. She had the air of a guard over prisoners, rather than that of an affable hostess, and her guests showed they felt it by stealthy glances and subdued snatches of side-talk. It was a rare event, indeed, when Mrs. Bowles had company, and rarer still for her to let any one but herself set a stitch in her quilts, she being "so bigotty about her things," as her neighbors declared privately. Some very strong motive must have compelled her to offer this reluctant hospitality, but none dared question her. She was

one of those women that command deference, — a singular combination, neither hate nor fear, love nor esteem, rendered by a weaker nature under the compulsion of a stronger one.

"It's real queer for Mrs. Bowles to have a quiltin', hain't it?" whispered Mrs. Rush to her neighbor Mrs. Stump, made bold by the entire stretch of quilt between her and the morose hostess.

"'T is, for a fact! 'spect she'll pick out every stitch when we're all gone!" said the other woman spitefully, knowing too well her own failings as a seamstress.

"Wonder what made her?"

"Dun-know. My man ain't bid to supper, neither. Is yours?"

"No; nary man is."

"Mebby it's 'cause she's a widow woman," hazarded Mrs. Stump. At this moment the glance of the hostess fell on the two whisperers, who felt like conspirators, and tried to divert suspicion by increased assiduity in "running the diamonds" into which the quilt was laid off.

Mrs. Rush was not a woman easily cowed, and if a little "flustered," as she would have said, rallied quickly; being by nature as insensible as a rubber ball, — the harder the blow the greater the rebound, — she called out affably, with that superfluity of voice common to people who dwell in the country and talk across large spaces:—

"Mrs. Bowles, is this the 'Risin' Sun' pattern,

RBC
NcU

or the 'Old Maid's Puzzle'? Me an' Mrs. Wilson can't make out. 'Pears like I never could tell them patterns apart!"

Whereupon ensued an animated explanation and comparison of the two, either sufficiently hideous to drive one mad; and Mrs. Bowles's attention was diverted.

The discussion at last wore itself out, when a new topic was started by some one saying: —

"Uncle Billy 's chillin' agin. Seems like he cain't git 'em broke with bervin nor nuthin'! My man see him a-sittin' out in the sun, tilted agin' the house in his chair, just a-shakin' like a yaller dog in a thunder storm."

Commiseration was expressed by all for this universal "uncle," who could claim actual kinship with none of them. They gave this title to all old men, and that of "aunt" to all old women after they had "turned" sixty, as a mark of esteem.

This subject exhausted, another woman added her budget of news: —

"I heerd that Mrs. Whittaker was took awful bad agin last night. She 's been a-lookin' terrible. She 's powerful puny."

"Yes," chimed in her opposite neighbor, "Lucetty 's had to set up, keepin' bags of hot salt and hop poultices on her stummick, for three nights runnin'."

"If that woman did n't have the hypo and would hump herself, she 'd be a heap better off. As to looks, she 's like a singed cat — 'looks a

heap worse than she feels,' " observed Mrs. Bowles sternly.

" An' Lucetty would n't be as slim as a bean-pole an' as slab-sided as a scantlin'," added Mrs. Stump, " if her ma would stir round a little more."

" Poor Lucetty! 't seems to me a heart of stone would pity her, with all she 's got on her back. A sick mammy, and a daddy that 's lazier than a white dog! " said Mrs. Rush, with superficial sympathy, induced by a daring desire to oppose Mrs. Bowles, of whom the whole community stood in awe, especially the women, who knew she considered them collectively a " passel of fools."

" She 's that fond of readin' and studyin', too," volunteered Mrs. Clark, — who could do neither, owing to early neglect, yet cherished in her secret soul a pitiful ambition to learn when she had time, — " that she sews for the schoolma'am, so she 'll teach her nights. I heerd she 's a studyin' algibbery," in an awed voice, " she 'lows to be a teacher."

" It 's a heap more gumption than Zeb 's got! Killin' 's too good for him! " observed Mrs. Bowles viciously.

To this there was a general assent, and a minute dissection of the characters of the absent Whittakers followed, till some one remarked, " and Zeb, he 's *that* feered of the draft," and gave a new turn to the conversation, and they fell to talking of the proposed conscription. One quiet little woman, who lived nearer than the rest to Ridgely,

the post village, and had later news, startled them into vehement discussion by saying: —

"They do say Jeff Riddle 's took."

"What 's he been doin' ?" asked Mrs. Rush, the only woman who had perfect control of her faculties — of which curiosity was the strongest — under the austere eye of Mrs. Bowles.

"They do say he 'd ought to have went back to the army a month ago. But Harv Wilson he persuaded him it was n't no use to go, as the Rebs was sure to whip the Yankees, and the North was n't a-goin' to put up with no more drafts, and most of the Black Republicans' time was up, and they was n't likely to enlist again. So he just 'lowed he 'd stay, for he thought it likely Harv knowed more about it than he did."

"H-m-m, arrested for desertin', I reckon," observed Mrs. Bowles.

"Yes," eagerly assented the speaker, "I disremembered the name of it. But, anyhow, he 's in jail now in Crofton."

"He 's likely to be shot, the fool!" said Mrs. Bowles fiercely; "I told him not to mind Harv."

In that community, blood never became so diluted by marriage that kinship ceased; and it was suddenly remembered that Jeff was the son of Mrs. Bowles's niece, who had married Harv Wilson's cousin, Bill Riddle, and the conversation thereafter trickled into an uneasy silence. It was not a pleasant party, for all present felt constrained and anxious in the presence of Mrs.

Bowles, without any definite reason. One or two of the women were shrewd enough to suspect some stronger motive behind the invitation than mere friendliness and hospitality, knowing well the lack of the former and the rarity of the latter on the part of the hostess. But a quilting was a quilting, and, as such, too precious an opportunity for a little pleasure to be lost; in their dull, monotonous lives any change was welcome, and rare enough in these war times. At Mrs. Bowles's there were no lively sallies, no rather broad jokes, retailed at the tops of their robust voices, to be greeted with bursts of shrill laughter, as were common elsewhere on such occasions. They chafed inwardly at the restraint too fine for their comprehension, and privately harbored the resentment weak natures feel at the wordless contempt of the strong and arrogant, which they instinctively recognized Mrs. Bowles to be.

It was a relief to one and all when supper was announced, and they filed out through the door into the dazzlingly clean kitchen, where the drop-leaf table was set, its length further extended by a smaller one to accommodate them all. The supper was bountiful and excellent, and nearly everything on the table was the product of Mrs. Bowles's farm, which she managed and largely worked by herself. The coffee was parched barley with a dash of genuine, for the real article at fifty cents a pound was not to be thought of; the jellies, preserves (of which there were numerous kinds),

"float" cake; and rhubarb pies were all sweetened with the maple sugar made in the camp in the early spring. The meats were ham, cured by her, and chickens of her own rearing. She had spun and woven the table-cloth, and also her brown checked linsey gown, and the gay rag-carpet on the floor. Mrs. Bowles was indeed a capable woman, one of the kind men hate and women envy. She could have led an army, like Joan of Arc or an Amazon. A longing for heroic action smouldered in her soul, a passion for conflict, that would have led her to kill an enemy ruthlessly. Failing an outlet for these misplaced emotions, she was a woman who had boundless contempt for her own sex, and was a hater of men because they failed to make use of their opportunities; her ideas were heroic, and the men about her were not heroes. Yet her opinions were matters of principle and conscience, and carried her to extremes; for she had no sophistry in her nature, and could not permit herself a middle path.

The guests were waited on by Liddy Ann Collins, Mrs. Bowles's "hired girl," a sort of secondary hostess, who made up in trifling garrulousness for the taciturnity of her mistress; in truth, she was vastly the more popular of the two, for "girls" in that locality stood on an equal footing with the families which they served. A kind of pity was felt for Liddy Ann by the neighbor women; and when one of them ventured to express it openly, she replied, with the accidental wisdom of a fool: —

"I ain't got no cause to complain. She pays me my dollar a week reg'lar. An' her bark 's worse 'n her bite. She ain't like the balance of us weemen, but the Lord A'mighty made her, I reckon, like he did the rest of us. If she 's more stronger 'n we are, — like a man, — 't ain't her fault, as I know of!"

After supper, all retired to the "settin' room," also connected with the kitchen by a door, to get their wraps from the bed, piled high with feathers. Mrs. Bowles's house had but three large rooms, and a tiny bedroom off the kitchen, devoted to Liddy Ann, and on this occasion the sitting-room served as a dressing-room for her guests. The company quietly dispersed down the long lane through the sun-tinted twilight of the chill April evening. They parted with loud and reiterated good-bys at the big gate where the lane entered the road; some climbed the rail fence into a field, while others kept to the path by the roadside.

As the last one disappeared down the dip of the hill, Mrs. Bowles, who was looking after them from her doorway, said with a short, contemptuous laugh: —

"A pack of fools! Them men owe me something for this day's work! My quilt 's nigh about spoiled! I 'll have to pick out every stitch of it and wash it, to make it decent."

CHAPTER II

AN AWKWARD SQUAD

While Mrs. Bowles's guests were stitching and gossiping, the men were very differently and, as they thought, secretly employed; for the quilting was a mere pretext to rid them of the "women folks," and their insatiable curiosity and eternal questioning, and in this Mrs. Bowles was their confederate.

That there were meetings many and mysterious the women were beginning to suspect, forced to misgiving by the poor excuses the men — hard pressed through lack of the inventive faculty — gave for their frequent absences. As yet, none of them had been bold enough or shrewd enough to ferret out this mystery. At about the hour when the quilting party were discussing the Whittakers, a farm wagon might have been seen making its way from Crofton — the seat of Middle County — by an unfrequented road, along which there were but two houses for a distance of several miles. The road was a series of dips up and down all the way. At one moment nothing could be seen but the undulating corn-fields, ploughed but not planted; for the season was backward even for the last of April,

and no corn would be dropped in that locality till the pawpaw leaves were as big as squirrels' ears, a rule laid down by the pioneers and proved by experience. The next instant, from the top of the rise a glimpse might be caught of a tiny cabin set in an enchanting dale, surrounded by young green wheat; or a sparkle of sunlight on the creek, whose course was indicated by the glaring white trunks of leafless "ghost trees," as the Indians called the sycamore. Lem Beasly, the driver of the vehicle, was a sun-tanned farm-hand, strong and healthy, dressed in rough, faded clothes of home-made butternut jeans. By his side on the high spring seat of the wagon sat a youth, also strongly built and of medium height. He lacked the ruddy hues one would look for, with his bright blonde hair, lucent blue eyes, and sturdy physique. Over his face spread a pallor and wanness inexplicable, and his air would have been languid but for the momentary interest that roused him. The eager glance of the eye, the smile of recognition as familiar points in the landscape pleased him, testified mutely that, for some reason, it was all dearer now than when last seen. In every respect he was a contrast to the driver; but perhaps the most marked difference lay in their clothing, for the young man was dressed in army blue, and evidently took no small pride in the fact. It was Frank Neal, at home on a furlough, after having been taken prisoner and confined at Andersonville three months. He and Lem seemed to have been discussing this, for he said: —

"If it had n't been that some men from a New York regiment were there, too, I 'd been rotting there now."

"Why, how 's that?"

"Well, for some reason the 'Johnnies' always exchange the New Yorkers first. All of us Hoosiers know that. I had a chum in this New York regiment, but the poor fellow died — starved! — did n't stand it three months. A rumor went around — I never did know how it got started — that there would be an exchange, and we knew the New Yorkers would have the first chance. So I just changed clothes with poor Van Voort, — he had died at my side in the night, — and I was all right. When they called out his name I answered, and when they examined me I was from the —th New York and not from the —st Indiana, so that 's how I am here. I sent his things to his folks, and wrote and told them all about it. Poor Van! he was a good fellow, — as brave a boy as ever lived, and he never whimpered, but he 'd been raised in a city and he could n't stand it."

Tears rose to Frank's eyes, and for an instant he fell into sad musing; then, throwing off the mood, he observed brightly: —

"My folks don't look for me till to-morrow. And you bet I was glad to see you in town, Lem! Saved me a six-mile tramp, for I never could stand it to wait. But I 'm hardly strong enough yet for that long a walk."

"That 's so," said Lem, with a sympathy of tone his words could not convey.

"Where are you living now, — on the Culver place yet?"

"Yes," said Lem, "been there nigh a year."

"Left Harv Wilson, did you?"

"Yes. Harv 's just a leetle too much of a 'Butternut' for me. Whiles I 'm a Democrat, I ain't no 'Copperhead,' and that 's what he is."

"Glad to hear that, Beasly! If there were more fellows like you, the governor would n't be worried by the stay-at-homes."

As Frank spoke, they dipped into a valley which gave them glimpses into its green windings, and his sharp eyes saw moving objects that he could not make out, appearing and disappearing below a gentle swell.

"Hello! What 's that, Lem?" pointing in the direction.

"Don't you bother your head about them, young feller!" said Lem with emphasis; "better let Copperheads alone! Don't stir 'em up. They 're apt to bite, an' their bite 's pizen."

"Well, who are they, anyway?"

"I 'll tell you, but never tell it as comin' from me. It 's the Knights a-trainin'."

"Knights? what knights?"

"Ain't you heerd about 'em? 'The Sons of Liberty,' or 'The Knights of the Golden Circle,' as we call 'em here. They 're all the same. 'Spect that 's the Riffle Township Temple a-trainin'."

"You don't mean to say they 're in this township, a township that was first to fill its quota?"

"They just are! But fillin' that there last quoty took nigh about all the Union men there was left out of this county, except the fellers, like your pap, that 's too old to go, and War Democrats, and a lot of them went, too."

"Who 's at the head of this business?"

"Old Harv Wilson 's County Commander. Now don't you tell this; it 's as much as my neck 's worth! But he 's been in and around Ridgely, an' 's goin' to hold a meetin' in our township to form a branch Temple next Friday night in that there little empty log-cabin on his place. They come to me, an' says I, 'No siree; whiles I 'm a Democrat I ain't no Copperhead!' They 're a-gittin' a Temple in every township in this here county!"

Both men looked intently eastward at the moving objects, which were too much obscured by the nature of the land, and too far off, to take the shape of men.

"They played it smart on their weemen! Ol' Miz Bowles helped 'em. She 's one of 'em, as much as a lady can be. Got all the weemen-folks to her house to a quiltin' so 's to give the men a chance to drill. Lord, would n't Miz Rush be as mad as a wet hen if she know'd it! She 's as spunky as a rat when her dander 's up!" and Lem chuckled with enjoyment.

"You 're right, Lem. Keep out of it! It 's a dangerous game."

"You bet!" was Lem's laconic reply, which nevertheless conveyed his opinion of the danger as well as many words.

"I believe I'll take a look at them and see who're there." Even as he spoke, Frank's foot was on the wheel and he dropped lightly to the ground. Lem looked troubled. "Be mighty sly, and don't let 'em ketch a squint of you!" he warned. "But you'd better not go at all."

"But I will! You drive on and wait for me at the creek. I'll not be long."

Frank swiftly and warily made his way toward the dip, and, when he reached a point where observation was possible, threw himself flat on the ground. It was a strange sight for that retired spot. Below him lay a tiny vale, on which was spread a thick sward of blue grass, nibbled short as the pile of velvet by the sheep, which were huddled afar off, watching the intruders with timid surprise. Over it fell the brilliant sunshine of late April, untempered by shadows, for as yet the pawpaws and little elms on the hills shutting it in were leafless. A swift, strong stream of April wind blew unceasingly, and brought with it faint, sweet scents of opening buds, robbed from trees far out of sight, and the resinous odor of the new greenery of the pines that grew a mile away on the bluffs of Honey Creek. It bore the hum of bees reveling in the bloom of the wild plum, the contented chirping of hedge-sparrows building, and the few rare flutings of the meadow-lark. To men intent on conspiracy and sedition, these appeals of nature for peace and happiness fell as on the ears of the deaf. Even Frank, so thankful to be

free from the horrors of prison to watch the coming of spring in the open country that he loved, gave these things no heed. He was intently watching the spectacle below him. Twenty-five or thirty men were going through military evolutions with guns roughly cut out of wood, in order to give them skill in handling arms, when they should have acquired them. These they managed more or less clumsily, but it was evident they were earnestly seeking to gain dexterity. Not a word was spoken except by the drill-master, whose commands were given in so low a tone that Frank could not catch them.

"Well, I'll be shot!" said Frank after watching them for a few moments. He could not but admire their cunning in selecting their parade-ground, for the little valley was so retired that it was rarely traversed, and the road by which it was reached was a mere lane near the "big road." Lem had taken this short cut to accommodate a farmer living on it, fetching home his plough, which had been sent to town for repairs.

Frank went back as secretly as he had come, and joined Lem at the ford as he had agreed.

"Lem," he said, "that means mischief! I'll not go on with you. Swear to me — Hold up your hand!" Lem did so. "Swear that you'll not tell what you saw, and that I came home to-day and was with you!"

Lem took the required oath, then asked anxiously: —

"What you goin' to do?"

"That I can't tell you. You're loyal, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Now drive on, for it may save trouble if you don't even know the direction I take."

Lem drove, splashing through the creek, up the hill and out of sight, while Frank watched him, and, when he could no longer hear the clatter of the wagon, faced about and returned over the road by which he had just come from Crofton.

CHAPTER III

"COMPANIONS OF OWLS"

It was late for a farm-house to show the glow of a candle, for the working day was long in that community: they arose at dawn, and were in bed before the afterglow had scarcely faded. Yet a thin thread of light revealed itself from a cabin on the extreme bounds of Harv Wilson's farm. In spite of a heavy horse-blanket hung on a nail on one side of the casement, and made fast by a jack-knife thrust into the frame at the other, a betraying shaft fell across the dooryard. Within the cabin, a company of half a score of men had gathered at this unwonted hour near midnight. The cabin had but one room, in which there was no furniture, for the last tenant had moved out. A rickety bench, a goods-box, and sundry billets of firewood furnished the seats. On the rude shelf above the fireplace, in which were the cold ashes of the last fire, were two candles stuck into potatoes shaped for the purpose.

Harv Wilson himself was there, and seemed to be the moving spirit. He was one of those dominant men found in every community, a self-constituted leader, the "big man" of the neighbor-

hood. Unfortunately for his followers, he was an unrighteous man, and his influence was wholly evil. He was unprincipled in business transactions, and his face gave condemning testimony to his private character. The swarthy red of his skin and his mottled cheeks told of intemperance and sensuality; his bloodshot eyes, with thick lids half closed, were crafty and cruel, and his narrow forehead betokened scant intellectuality and low cunning. His nose was bulbous and pitted, after years of hard drinking. The flabby skin hung down along his throat like the dewlap of a bull, and bristled with short red beard. His countenance proclaimed him a knave of the lowest sort. Yet he possessed a rude, virile force that enabled him to govern men. His very figure, with its muscular legs and brawny torso, testified to his power. He possessed tireless endurance, great courage, even utter fearlessness, because of his contempt of law and order, decency and probity. He feared neither God nor man, heaven nor hell, as he often boasted.

Harv was wide awake and listening, but the other men were blinking sleepily, worn out with a hard day's work.

"Well, boys," he said, "if they don't come pretty soon, there won't be any 'Vestibule' tonight. They were due at eleven o'clock, and it's nigh on to midnight now," and he closed his watch as he spoke.

"Maybe they 're lost," hazarded one man.

"Both of them fellers thought they could get here by directions, but that's not so easy."

They lapsed into silence again, for farmers deprived of their natural amount of sleep are not loquacious.

Harv Wilson's "place" lay in Honey Creek Township, — about six miles southwest of the Bowles farm, which was situated in Riffle Township, — in one of the beautiful, picturesque spots so common to that part of Indiana, but more especially found along the sinuous course of Honey Creek. The house where he lived was secluded and difficult to reach. It lay on a by-road that branched off the turnpike leading to Crofton. The cabin was still more difficult to find. It stood on the top of a bluff overlooking the creek, and the only means of egress was by a wagon track across the fields to Harv's lane and thence to the road. This isolation did not matter much to its tenants, for they were usually too poor to own a team. Behind the cabin, a narrow path led down to the bottom of the ravine and followed the spring branch to the creek. This gorge opened wide, like a gaping mouth, at the place where the "branch" (as brooks are invariably called in the vernacular of the South and West) emptied into the creek, and here there was a deep, funnel-like pool, excavated in storms by the heavy flow of water from the ravine. Such a spot was usually a landing place for canoes, where one rudely hollowed from a log, and belonging to the tenant of the cabin, generally lay

tied up. But to-night there were three or four, and another had just been made fast; while filing up the steep path were three men, cautiously picking their way as if unused to the place. Not a word was uttered. The occasional roll of a pebble, and the heavy breathing of a portly man, blown by the unusual exertion, were the only sounds that broke the heavy stillness. Even the owls and night-prowlers were silenced by this unwonted intrusion. This walk was not without an object, but led them straight to the cabin whence the flash of light came. On reaching the door, the foremost man knocked twice softly and slowly, then three times rapidly. His companions were some distance in the rear. A voice within asked a question that was audible to him only, to which he replied, "America," in a low tone, and Harv Wilson opened the door to them.

After exchanging greetings, the new-comers were civilly offered the rude seats, then an uneasy silence fell upon the company. All were known to each other, as they lived on farms near by or in the village of Ridgely. Alec Rush, the blacksmith at the cross-roads, Dr. Skagg of Ridgely, and Tom Peyton, a clerk in the general store in Ridgely, were the latest comers.

"We got into the wrong landin'," said Alec, "it was so dark. These two fellers aint got no notion of handlin' a canoe, and I had a hefty load a-polin' down. Three 's a tight fit for my dugout. Ain't the Commander here yet? We 'lowed we 'd be the last."

Harv was about to answer him, when a low, mournful cry, "O-a-k-h-o-u-n," long drawn out, ending in a wail, sounded startlingly near. To most of the men it seemed to have no particular significance, but by Harv it was comprehended perfectly; for he answered by going to the door, raising the latch, which could not be lifted from the outside, as the leather latch-string had been pulled in to guard against intrusion. He answered the cry with a similar one, and in a moment three men stood at the door, with each of whom he carried on a strange colloquy, with lengthy pauses between parts of words and sentences.

"What — a star" —

"Arc—turus," replied the man outside.

"What — of — the — night?"

"Will — ye — inquire?"

"Inquire — ye? — Come."

"O—rion" was the password given with the "o" long drawn out. The new-comers were then permitted to enter; for they were the men expected from Crofton, and the Grand Temple at Indianapolis, to institute a branch Temple in Honey Creek Township. Upon entering, they proceeded, with grotesque gravity, to give Harv the grips and signs of the degree of the Knights of the Golden Circle, to which they belonged, while the others present gaped in amazement. One of these men Harv did not know, and he looked him over suspiciously, peeping from a narrow slit between his dropped eyelids, although the stranger seemed

perfectly familiar with all the forms. The object of his distrust was a tall, slight young man, of commonplace appearance, whose dark gray, near-sighted eyes were shielded by spectacles. His light reddish hair was accompanied by a fair, delicate skin thickly sprinkled with freckles; a large, pleasant mouth filled with perfect teeth gave him an amiable expression. He was quick and nervous in all his movements, but remarkably slow of speech.

Stephen Coultiss — the Commander of the Parent Temple of Middle County at Crofton — was heavy-set and low-browed. Above his forehead rose a thick shock of black hair, which gave one the impression of its being stacked like straw. His mouth was wide, with thin shaven lips set between the heavy jaws of a remarkably broad face. A short, thick beard covered the throat only, leaving the cheeks and chin bare. Altogether, his appearance was neither prepossessing nor intelligent. The third man was Dodd, Grand Commander of Indiana. He carried himself alertly, and wore the eager air of an enthusiast whose fatuity carried him above all minor considerations of prudence and caution. He was fearless because foolhardy, and had not prescience to foresee results. His schemes were of amazing magnitude and audacity, to the successful issue of which he was brought to see no obstacle until the gallows waved its hideous arms over his head. He could lead men mysteriously; men of cool heads, calculating minds, common sense, even intellect, were enthralled by the

spell of his bombastic sentimentality, and borne along by the rush of his enthusiasm to ruin; some to prison, some to banishment, some to their graves.

Harv was well acquainted with these two men, one of whom observed his manifest mistrust of their companion.

"Oh, he 's all right," said Coultiss, as if Harv had uttered his doubts. "He 's one of us, straight from ol' Kaintuck."

"I came from Louisville, sir, and my name is Oliver Tapp," said the suspect, with that soft slurring of the "r's" peculiar to the South.

"He 's a-peddlin' tinware," said Coultiss, with a wink and a grin at the company in general.

Harv drew Tapp and Coultiss into a corner and asked in a low tone: —

"You come from Judge Bullett at Louisville?"

"Yes, sir; but later from Indianapolis and Terre Haute."

"These fellows ain't even had the 'Vestibule' degree, and it ain't worth while to let 'em know too much," said Harv with a backward jerk of his thumb at the group by the fireplace. "I 'm going to sound 'em though, and drop 'em a hint that we 're going to turn this from a political to a military organization."

"Have you any definite plans yet?" asked Tapp of the Grand Commander, who had joined them.

"Yes; but I want to talk them over with the Commanders of the County Temples first before

we give them to the members. I've already instructed the Commander of the Innermost Temple"—

"Ah," said Tapp quickly, "that's Bledso of Indianapolis!"

"You seem posted," observed Harv.

"I should think so!" was the significant reply. "I've orders from Bullett, who has just received a general outline of the work of the reconstructed. order from Vallandigham."

"Suppose we give these fellows the 'Vestibule,' then we can let them go if they want to, and we can consult together afterward."

To this they consented, and the work proceeded. Owing to their restricted quarters and the lateness of the hour, some of the forms were necessarily dispensed with. Harv Wilson and Tapp acted as sponsors, as two were required. Dodd officiated as Knight Lecturer by right of office, and read from a ritual of his own composition, in unctuous tones.

"Brothers," he read (meaning the sponsors), "the purpose ye have declared touching this stranger (the candidate) is most worthy; let him advance to our altar by the regular steps; instruct him in our chosen solemn attitude, and let him give testimony of that which is in him."

To this the sponsors agreed by an affirmative bend of the head.

"Man, thou art now in the Vestibule, and if found worthy will hence be ushered into the con-

secrated Temple where Truth dwells amid her votaries." He read for a few moments in this high-flown strain, and finished with the question: —

"As thou wouldst answer to a good conscience, is thy soul pure and fitted to the indwelling of the Truth?"

The candidate, embarrassed by the grandiloquence of the ritual, did not know what he was expected to answer, till he caught an affirmative nod from Tapp and faltered out a throaty "Yes."

The men very naturally labored under the impression that they were at "meetin'," begotten of the liberal use of "thee" and "thou," which they never heard anywhere else, and their faces expressed seriousness to the verge of sadness. When possible, the candidates had been "lumped" to shorten the ceremony, and, as it was now quite midnight, an unheard-of hour for them to be out of bed, the Grand Commander hurried through the Declaration of Principles, which further mystified the new members, and caused one, at least, to change the opinion he had hitherto held of the order. Then Coultiss stumblingly read the penalty for disclosure, which was to the effect that, if a member divulged the secrets of the order, his body would be quartered, and one quarter would be placed at the north gate, one at the south gate, one at the east gate, and one at the west gate of this mythical Temple. In plain language, they were warned of assassination for treachery. They

were then taught the grips and signs, and rehearsed the colloquy of the Vestibule degree.

Meantime Dodd, the Knight Lecturer, forgetting the time and place, spoke with all the fervor of an orator before a vast audience. Extravagant enthusiasm for the cause he championed emanated from him and roused his hearers, as certain odors will rouse some animals.

The roll of his restless eye, the ceaseless play of expression that flashed like sheet-lightning and scarcely faded ere it reappeared, the frequency and rapidity of gesture, proclaimed him a reckless zealot. What wonder that these dull, bucolic minds were enkindled! Carried away by Dodd's irresistible energy, they bound themselves to what they scarcely knew. They were not collected enough to realize the full purport of the oaths they took. In truth, the lowest or Vestibule degree did not enlighten them much as to the purposes of the three higher, into which they were to be inducted, should they prove to be of the right kind of material.

It required some time to go through with this ceremony, abridged as it was, and it left the candidates, simple farmers with the exception of the clerk, bewildered and apprehensive. Most of them slunk away home, — feeling like black conspirators, dreading to meet their wives, who would scold and question, — leaving the others and Harv in consultation with the three strangers.

CHAPTER IV

MORE LIGHT

No sooner had these men withdrawn than those remaining — among whom were Zeb Whittaker and Alec Rush the blacksmith — drew together around a table improvised from a barrel-head, and Coultiss opened a small valise he had brought with him.

"Are all here faithful? And do you solemnly swear to reveal nothing that now transpires?" asked Dodd in a tremulous voice, so wrought upon by the excitement of the occasion as to be almost hysteric.

Each in his own way gave promise of secrecy, and Coultiss prepared to lay the contents of the valise before them. Tapp obligingly took down from the shelf one of the improvised candlesticks to further the examination. Within the valise, neatly packed, were many small vials and several little clocks.

"A clock-peddler, by golly!" observed Rush with a chuckle. "Lots of peddlers to-night!"

"These are all inventions of one of our order to help the cause;" explained Coultiss, "these little vials hold Greek fire, and when they are thrown again' a house or barn they burn it! Nothing 'll

put it out! We 've already made good use of them in Kentucky."

"What is this?" asked Harv Wilson, touching a metal ball thickly set with nipples for caps.

"That 's a hand-grenade. The two halves unscrew, and in the centre is a vial of an explosive that is sure to go off whenever it is thrown against anything. One of these caps will certainly explode it, there are so many of them."

"W'y, what have we got to do with them things?" bluntly asked the blacksmith.

"Use 'em when the time comes! This war 's got to stop! The usurpation of Abe Lincoln's government 's got to stop! It 's tyranny! We 'll not stand the draft! We 'll resist, and these will help us!" answered Coultiss violently.

At this outburst the new recruits looked at each other in alarm, for they had altogether misapprehended the intent of the order; if they had formed any opinion of it at all, it was as a sort of safety valve for letting off surplus dissatisfaction in idle demonstrations or threats; that it could lead to deeds of arson and murder they had never dreamed. Jim Swazey, the smith's new hand, took it all coolly, — so much so, indeed, that one would have thought he was thoroughly posted. Zeb Whittaker had not energy enough to betray his feeling, if he had any. But Alec Rush looked very serious, and felt that Harv Wilson had trapped them as neatly as he himself did muskrats in Honey Creek.

"These," said Coultiss, taking up one of the

clocks, — "I reckon you wonder what they 're for. They 'll set off the fuse to a mine that 'll blow up state-houses and forts and arsenals! They 're mighty good medicine for 'Lincoln dogs'!" and he smiled wolfishly. "Some of these could be put to a good use right here in this county, over in Riffle Township. The Grand Council 's heard of Abner Neal's sayings and doings, and they 've ordered a dose out of one of these little bottles for him!"

Although Harv Wilson hated Abner Neal as the most zealous and outspoken Union man in the adjoining township, a man his opposite in every respect, yet even he did not like the idea conveyed by Coultiss's speech.

"You don't mean to kill him, do you?" Harv asked gruffly.

"W-e-l-l, no, — only give him a little hint to keep his mouth shut!"

"How will you do it?" asked Tapp interestedly.

"Well, sir, some man here 's got that to do! You 're bound by your oaths to help the cause in every way in your power, and the Council decides how that is to be done. We think a little hint like settin' fire to his barn 'll do it, and this is the stuff for that job!" said Coultiss, holding up one of the vials.

He and Dodd observed with annoyance the evident dislike of the project shown clearly on the troubled faces about him.

"You know the penalty!" he said menacingly.

"And there 's another job set for Middle County Temple; that 's to raid the jail and let out the bounty-jumpers and deserters. You 're bound to help and protect them whenever and wherever you can, and to resist the draft. These are orders from headquarters."

"There ain't any bounty-jumpers in jail now, and only one deserter, and he ain't worth the stuff in that bottle!" observed Harv, who had been the means of getting him there.

"That don't matter. It 's the principle," said Dodd.

"As for the other fellows," observed Jim Swazey, "they 're well took care of outside of jail!"

Coultiss gave him a sharp look, which he returned in kind, then said: "We might as well settle Abner Neal's business now. We 'll draw lots. Now 's the time to show your grit!"

"I did n't join the Knights to burn my neighbors' barns," said Alec sturdily, "an' I won't draw no lots, neither!"

"Remember the penalty!" said Dodd solemnly.

"Penalty be damned! I ain't no firebug!"

"You 'll not turn traitor to the cause?" asked Harv, who knew his man and the uselessness of urging; for, like most good-natured persons, Alec was incredibly stubborn when once his mind was made up.

"No. I 'll respect my oath as far as tellin' goes. But I 'll see the whole order in the pit before I 'll do such dirty tricks as them! You may just count

me out of the whole sneakin' business!" And before they could stop him Alec left the cabin.

"D' you think he 's safe?" asked Dodd anxiously.

"Oh, he 'll be mum if he says he will. But Alec 's set. He won't do nothin' if he says he won't, though he 's mighty easy-goin' generally," said Swazey.

"Mr. Wilson, will you proceed to prepare the lots?" asked Dodd.

Harv retired to the corner with Coultiss, where they whispered together and soon returned with the strips of paper, which they put in a hat and Harv passed to the half dozen men who remained. Each put in his hand, and a long breath of relief testified to the blank he drew. The dullard Zeb was reached last, and there was left in the hat but one lot, which, when he turned it over, showed a rude sketch of the skull and crossbones.

CHAPTER V

AT "MEETING"

At the forks of the road which led east to Crofton, and south to the village of Ridgely, stood a weather-beaten church, known locally as "Liberty Meetin' House." It was not so called from any political bias, but from the fact of its being free to itinerant preachers of any denomination who chose to stick up a notice at the village post-office, or Alec Rush's smithy, announcing preaching therein. It had no regular pastor, and any chance preacher that held "meetin'" had cause to be gratified at the size of his congregation, though possibly not at its motive for coming, which, happily, he was not wise enough to discern.

The first Sunday in May was a bright day with a chill in the air. The hitching-racks around the little church were crowded with horses. Within, the benches were filled with their owners; groups in the yard were "passing the time of day," while from every direction laggards were still coming afoot. The church could not hold them all; and men who were unable to find places without going to the "Amen Corner," yet felt piously inclined, loitered near the windows to catch the "drippings

of the gospel;" while those not so disposed seated themselves on the rail fence in the sun, and quietly exchanged opinions as to the prospects of wheat, or corn planting, the war, or even the draft, which was imminent, and opposed in Middle County with bitter rancor.

The people thereabout were not given to the study of "doctrine," for their religious training had been too discursive; one Sunday they would listen to a Primitive Baptist, and on others to a Missionary Baptist, a New Light or Universalist, a Presbyterian, Old or New School, and occasionally to a Methodist, until their minds were in hopeless confusion as to future rewards and punishments and methods of baptism. This Sunday, brother Jocktan Teeter, of the Old School Presbyterians, was to preach. The proceedings at the opening of the services were not formal. When a sufficiently large company had gathered, one of the church officers came to the door and called out in a big, cheerful voice, "Meetin 's about to begin. Come in, folkses!"

In they thronged, filling the seats to overflowing, men on one side of the house, women on the other. Some brought in chairs from their wagons, and sat in the rear of the church, tilted comfortably against the wall.

The old custom of lining out the hymn was still in usage there, and Zeb Whittaker always "led the tune." He took no other part in the meeting and made no pretense to any religious belief, but

dozed peacefully through the sermon, starting visibly when disturbed by the force and fervor of the preacher's voice. But he loved to sing, which he did in a loud thin voice with considerably more confidence than was warranted, for it had a habit of breaking on the high notes, at which he was not in the least discomposed, but there was usually some snickering on the part of the youngsters in the congregation. If his daughter Lucetta happened to be present, the accident was not noticeable, for she would bravely carry the tune to a finish.

She was a natural musician, and it was rumored about the neighborhood that she aspired to learn to play on the cabinet organ, and that Miss Abbot would teach her the use of that instrument, as well as "algibbery." The purchase of an organ for Liberty Church had even been broached. Severe were the strictures of the Baptists and Presbyterians of the "Old School" when this proposition was timidly made, for they firmly believed and forcibly proclaimed that nothing but what had breath should praise the Lord. Whereupon Alec Rush, who belonged to the other faction, "'lowed he 'd have to send 'em his belisses."

With cheerful if rather dull countenances, unmusical voices, and curious unfitness on such a lovely day, they were singing heartily "I would not live always" to the old tune of "Frederick." Zeb's voice, as usual, had shattered on the high note, and Lucetta had continued to the end of the phrase, like a soaring lark, when half the congrega-

tion turned their heads, as if on a pivot, to the door on the men's side, at the entrance of a new-comer. Head-turning is contagious in a country assembly and involves the whole of it. The cause of the disturbance was Frank Neal, who had reached home the Thursday before. With innocent vanity and boyish audacity he came late, glorying in his uniform, and rather maliciously flaunting it in the faces of those whom he knew hated it. He wore a bright new one, and its yellow cavalry trimmings were in gorgeous contrast to the rusty blacks, butternut browns, and dull indigos which predominated in the raiment of the other men. He even wore spurs, and their jingling could be plainly heard during the "lining out" as he marched proudly down the aisle. He would have liked to wear full accoutrement, but an innate sense of propriety restrained him.

There was much curiosity and surprise expressed in the faces of those who watched his theatrical entry, for it was not generally known that Frank had been released from prison and had got home. For some private reason, he had kept it "shady," as he would have said. He walked forward till he found a vacant place behind Zeb Whittaker and in line with Lucetta, close under the pulpit. At the end of the preliminaries, brother Jocktan Teeter rose in the pulpit to preach. He was a man of strong prejudices, no education, a wonderful vocabulary of lengthy words, which he used from a fancy for their sonorous sound, though he was igno-

rant of their meaning. His sermon was a tirade of abuse against the existing government, interlarded with denunciatory texts which suited his purpose. The boy endured it passively for an hour, but the flush on his cheeks and nervous twisting of his body betokened a struggle to keep silent. On the bench in front of him sat Jim Swazey, the new hand at the blacksmith's, a stranger to Frank; and at the close of the discourse, which grew more and more vindictive as it neared the end, he turned with a contemptuous grin and stared full into Frank's face. Jim displayed on the bosom of his blue hickory shirt a device that was very popular. He gloried in the fact that he had once been arrested and taken to Indianapolis for wearing the emblem, and that it had been decided on the trial "that a man had a right to wear what he pleased, as it could not be construed into an 'overt act' to wear a cross section of a butternut." He had flaunted it with impunity ever since, and his example was servilely followed by the youths thereabout.

Frank's quick eye saw it. Already enraged by the covert insults of the preacher, and the taunt conveyed in Jim's grin, this open display of the sign of treason was too much. He dived into his pocket, drew out his knife, opened it, perfectly beside himself with fury, reached over and cut the pin off of Jim's shirt front, threw it on the floor, and crushed it under his heel. The people immediately around them who saw the act were paralyzed by

fright. Jim's reputation for violence was established, and they looked for murder.

"You may be a 'butternut' inside, but I'll be hanged if you shall carry the sign of it outside while I'm around!" Frank hissed in a whisper in Swazey's ear.

Jim was not a coward, but he was crafty, and did not resent Frank's violent act at the time, but "laid it up for him then and there." He knew these people of Riffle Township well, and realized that, if he turned on his adversary, a curious clannishness would lead them to espouse Frank's cause against him, notwithstanding they differed politically. Frank was a son of the soil; he was an outsider; in this case discretion was the better part of valor. It did not suit his purpose to retaliate there, but his revenge waited. Brother Teeter, observing signs of a disturbance and fearing an outbreak, hastily brought the services to a close and dismissed the congregation.

Frank stopped to speak to but few of his old acquaintances, not many of whom were sympathizers with the Union cause, but among those with whom he exchanged a hand-clasp were Zeb Whittaker and his daughter Lucetta.

From that day he was a marked man with the Knights, and the rival and enemy of Swazey.

CHAPTER VI

THE TIN-PEDDLER

"La, somebody 's openin' the big gate, Miz Bowles!" exclaimed Liddy Ann Collins, as she stood in the door, peering out from under her hand down the long lane to the "big gate," the inlet to the farm.

"An' there 's a kivered wagon, an' a white horse with a rope halter. It 's a tin-peddler!" she explained, after examining the entire turnout at long range with that remarkably acute vision of the country-bred person accustomed to long distances.

Mrs. Bowles gave no heed to Liddy Ann, but went on with her work. This contemptuous disregard would have dampened the ardor of most people, but not that of Liddy Ann Collins. Withdrawing her devouring gaze from the peddler, she turned fully to Mrs. Bowles.

"We need a new b'iler, and a skimmer, and some pie-pans," she volubly enumerated; "them 's burned black."

Mrs. Bowles, sternly reticent, still made no answer to her handmaiden, but, as the clatter of tinware became audible, she arose from her wheel, where she was engaged in spinning fleecy rolls of

wool into yarn, and looked over Liddy Ann's shoulder at the peddler, who was now well up the lane. At the sight of the man's face her casual gaze became one of sharp inspection, and after a moment she said: —

"Liddy Ann, go to the smoke-house and fetch them three bags of rags. The two crocks of tallow and the big mould of beeswax are on the swingin' shelf down cellar; fetch them too. They 'll nigh about pay for the things we need. And I 'll dicker with him."

Liddy Ann departed reluctantly as the peddler drew up at the yard gate, and, throwing the lines down on the back of his bony horse, he dismounted from the high seat and walked with a brisk step and assured air up to Mrs. Bowles. He asked in a quick, cheerful voice: —

"Can I make a trade with you in the tinware line to-day, ma'am?"

"Depends on what you fetch," she answered briefly.

He looked around swiftly, and, while he casually pulled the lobe of his left ear, said with pleasing distinctness: —

"I've got lots of useful things, and knickknacks to please the ladies;" then, significantly, in a lower tone, that the weasel-eared Liddy might not hear, "and some for the men."

At this instant Liddy Ann appeared, staggering under the weight of the rag-bags.

"There must be nigh about fifty pound! They 're awful hefty."

The peddler took them from her, and she disappeared hurriedly into the cellar by an outside door that opened with two leaves, and was soon back again with her "plunder," as she called it. They all walked to the wagon standing in the lane. The man unbuttoned the door on the side of the wagon, displayed a lot of cheap tinware, and glibly commended it to Liddy Ann, the saturnine mistress standing silently by. She made a selection of the articles she wanted, the peddler meanwhile jocularly praising her judgment and appearance, with the freedom of his kind, while she simpered with delight. The trade over, he turned to Mrs. Bowles.

"Have n't any use for this kind of an article, have you? sell it to you cheap. It 's a fine bread-box; keeps bread from drying a long time, and flies and ants out of it. Fine thing, *I* tell you!"

Mrs. Bowles looked at it dubiously and asked: —

"How much does it cost?"

He named the price.

"Cash or trade?" she asked shortly.

"Oh, cash for this! We can't make enough off of rags to afford to trade for such costly goods as this! Comes high, you know, it 's so useful," and he laughed knowingly and tapped the box. It did not emit the dull rumble of an empty box, but gave out a thick, muffled sound.

The woman frowned, but made no reply.

"And here, ma'am, 's a spice-box that goes along with it. Holds all kinds of precious stuff

in that line. Just the thing for the kitchen!" He took up, and extended toward her on the palm of his hand, — a very delicate, slender-fingered hand for one of his calling, — a large spice-box that would hold perhaps a half gallon of spice.

"Guess I'll take 'em both," said Mrs. Bowles, after pondering a moment. "Liddy Ann, go look in the cracked chiny sugar-bowl, the blue one that was Granny's, — on the top shelf of the pantry, — and fetch me some change," she said to that damsel, who was much taken with the gallantries of the peddler and was loth to leave. When Liddy Ann disappeared loiteringly on her errand, the peddler grinned impudently and said knowingly: —

"I thought you'd take 'em. Come in mighty handy by and by!" There was more in this speech than the mere words conveyed, for Mrs. Bowles said, almost fiercely: —

"I don't need anybody to help me to make up my mind, young man, and I stick to it after it is made!"

"Oh, nobody doubts that, ma'am. The loyalty of Mrs. Bowles to anything she puts her mind to is not questioned by any of us."

She paid no attention to his flattery, nor to the emphasis of the last sentence, but commanded sharply: —

"Help me with these things before she gits back."

The man took up the bread-box, which seemed heavy, and Mrs. Bowles the spice-box: she had

not accurately calculated its weight, so that it nearly fell from her grasp; but before Liddy Ann returned, the boxes were disposed of, and Mrs. Bowles and the peddler were at the wagon, looking at the counterpart of those which had been removed.

"Miz Bowles," bawled Liddy from the house door, "they ain't a cent in that there cracked chiny bowl, an' I let it fall an' busted it!"

"Fall in the money market," facetiously remarked the peddler. "That 's lucky. Gold 's dreadful high; forty-three per cent. premium!"

By this time Liddy Ann had reached the wagon-side.

"It does n't make any difference about the pay to-day, ma'am. I 'll be in the neighborhood a couple of weeks, and will be passing often, and you can pay me some time when I 'm going by."

"I 'll pay now!" said Mrs. Bowles gruffly, and she went to the house in search of funds.

No sooner had she disappeared than Liddy Ann began to assume a coquettish air, wetting her lips with her tongue, smoothing her locks and simpering foolishly, as do some women, unused to men's notice, in the presence of the most insignificant man.

"Did I hear you say you 'd be in the neighborhood some time?" she asked in her "company" voice.

"Yes," said the peddler, as he leaned negligently against the gate, rather impudently leering at her

in return for the smiles and airs which he fully comprehended.

"Where 're you stoppin' ?"

"No place yet. Just got here last night. Stayed at the tavern over at Ridgely last night. I 'd like to get a place to stay to-night, and maybe the rest of the week. I 've got right smart to do in this neighborhood if I sell out my load."

"La, I should say! You might stay here, only Miz Bowles is so set agin' men, they never put their foot on the place 'less they 're sent for. She don't like none of 'em. Says she knows 'em all as well as if she 'd knit 'em on two needles and made up the pattern," and Liddy Ann giggled cheerfully.

"That 's hard on the young fellows, seeing there 's such a nice girl here. You can't make me believe some young buck don't come," said the peddler jocosely.

"They 'd come mighty peart if she 'd let 'em!" said Liddy Ann, nodding toward the door that had swallowed up the gaunt form of Mrs. Bowles. "I can take my choice; fellers or my place! An' I ain't a-goin' to give up a dollar job fer no five-cent man!"

She gave him a look which delicately conveyed that she held him at a much higher rate of reckoning. He laughed uproariously, and slapped his thigh, in appreciation of her sprightly humor.

"It 's mighty rough on the boys, I should say!" cried he.

"Nary a man 's set foot on this place since I 've been here — and that 's since harvestin' last summer — that don't belong here, but Alec Rush, an' he come to set up Mrs. Bowles's new cuttin'-box that come the day of the quiltin'. There was n't no men-folks bid to that neither," she interjected regretfully. "I declare! I think Miz Bowles is too hard on 'em!"

"What kind of a cutting-box was it? I 'm the man that can set them up myself!" asked the peddler, reverting to the main point, from which Liddy was prone to wander.

"Now you 've got me guessin'! I don't know; Alec took it off in the boxes. Said it was a ticklish job, and he reckoned he could do it better at the shop. Seemed mighty hard to fix, for he ain't fetched it back yet! It 's nigh a week ago he took it."

"Likely something 's wrong about it, — something missing. I 'll take a look at it when I pass the blacksmith's. Where is his shop?"

Liddy obligingly explained, and then asked engagingly: —

"Are you a-goin' to the barbecue?"

He had never heard of the barbecue till she mentioned it, but answered with alacrity, "Oh, yes. I 'll be there. Hope you will, too. If I thought you would n't, more than likely I 'd stay away. When is it to be?"

"Long about the 'Fourth.'"

"Why, that 's Wednesday."

"Oh, I mean the Fourth o' July."

"Good heavens, that's two months off!"

Liddy looked surprised at his astonishment; for since the last one the whole neighborhood had been looking forward to the recurrence of the event, with that patience peculiar to such people. The barbecue was an institution of the political party in power in that and the adjoining township, and occurred as regularly as the day rolled round. She could see no reason for surprise on his part at its being two months off. Had Liddy been astute enough, the expression of that emotion by the peddler would have betrayed to her that he was accustomed to a crowded and busy life, one in which events hurried each other; but she was not shrewd enough to draw the inference, and, moreover, her curiosity was entirely without suspicion.

"W'y, that ain't long!" she observed. "I kind o' thought mebby Jim Swazey 'd ask me to go. But then he ain't nobody," she said, with a coquettish giggle and a scornful toss of her head.

"He 'd better not," said the peddler, with assumed ferocity, cracking his whip.

"They do say he 's a-settin' up to Lucetty Whittaker. But, my! she 's too 'uppety' fer him. She 's a-studyin' algibbery and a-learnin' to play on the organ; the schoolma'am 's a-teachin' her. But, la, I ain't a-carin' who he sparks, long 's 't ain't me!" and she pursed her lips contemptuously.

"Who is this girl Lucetta?" asked the peddler.

"Oh, she 's Zeb Whittaker's girl. Only child he 's got left, — had scads of 'em, but t' others is all dead, — and he can't support her and her mammy, he 's that do-less. They do say lately he 's taken to sleepin' all day an' runnin' all night. They ain't no corn shuckin' now," she said musingly, as if refuting some mental reason for Zeb's peculiar somnolency. "Anyhow, that 's better than sleepin' all the time he ain't eatin'."

At this moment Mrs. Bowles reappeared with a roll of "shin-plasters," — as fractional currency was called, — much out of proportion to the price asked for the boxes, one would think, and gave it to the peddler.

"That settles the bill?" she inquired.

"Yes, ma'am."

He then climbed to the high seat, turned the wagon around, nodded to Mrs. Bowles, clucked to the old horse, and clattered down the lane, not before giving Liddy Ann a smile which so "flustered" her she did not notice he had gone off with the boxes after all.

As the peddler closed the gate behind him he said to himself: —

"I think I 'll take a hand in setting up that cutting-box! Shrewd old girl, that Mrs. Bowles!"

The whirr of Mrs. Bowles's wheel was sounding again before he closed the gate; but Liddy Ann was standing in the doorway looking after him regretfully. He waved his hat to her from the road, then drove rapidly off to the blacksmith's, his load jingling loudly.

CHAPTER VII

THE WHITTAKERS

The Whittakers lived on a rented place, containing about thirty-five acres, that belonged to Abner Neal; and the creek and a by-road separated it from his home farm. It was a poor, worn-out piece of land, — from which the loam had washed, leaving bald fields of clay, — overrun by blackberry vines and thickets of wild plum, and split nearly in two by a most picturesque ravine. These ravines formed a peculiar feature of the country thereabout. They seemed to radiate from a common centre, a point on Honey Creek at the junction of Clifty (known as "the little creek") with the big creek. From the top of a high bluff on the Whittaker place could be counted nine of the "backbones," as the ridges that separated the ravines were called. They covered an area of about ten miles in an almost complete semicircle, and were on the left bank of the creek, which was very sinuous throughout its entire course. The opposite side of the stream was lined with rich bottom-lands rising to gentle hills, where rolling pastures alternated with magnificent woodland and highly cultivated fields. In the midst of one of the most

beautiful of these tracts stood a large brick house, the Neal homestead.

Every farm touching on that side of Honey Creek had one or more of the ravines; some were deep and dark as canyons, others as winding as the labyrinth; still others were shallow glens or mere hollows. These dark, cool gorges, which the sun never robbed of their chill, were a tangle of sarsaparilla and gosling and wild cucumber and clematis vines that beautified everything near them with thick shrouding foliage. Shade-loving flowers, ferns, and herbs flourished in the dim green light and cool moisture of their depths. Great pines and hemlocks found root-fastness upon their steep sides; and in autumn, from inaccessible ledges, the radiant red of the sumach lent a transient, dazzling glow to the prevailing gloom. Where the sun glinted through a mass of foliage, the partridge-berry grew amid moss and lichens, giving a dash of color to their dull grays and greens. Spicewood and sassafras blended their odors with those of the mints that grew along the "Branch;" for, invariably, through every one of these mimic canyons ran a stream of water, if no larger than a crystal trickle from a choked fountain. In every case they originated in a spring at the head of the gorge, where was a place of silence and sweet odors. The pioneers of Indiana had wisely chosen to make their homes convenient to these wells of living water, influenced, no doubt, by the resemblance of environment to that of

the mountain gorges of Tennessee and Kentucky, whence so many of them came.

As a mere artistic feature of the landscape, these ravines were neither prized nor admired by their owners. The medicinal herbs and roots and the various mints which they yielded generously, and which were in demand for domestic remedies, alone gave them value. Mrs. Whittaker was skilled in the preparation of these homely medicaments, for she knew the name of every plant that grew there and its peculiar healing virtue. To her, the wild gorge back of her cabin, with its tangle of lush greens, its enchanting lights and shades, was of supreme interest. From its heights and depths were got together the materials for her "doctorin'," and she dosed herself into a bedridden ghost by the concoctions she made and swallowed; but they gave an otherwise empty mind and hands employment, and whiled away hours that would have been leaden in their dullness. Her cunning in their distillation and use had brought her, unsolicited, the title of "Herb Doctor" among her humble neighbors.

There was a narrow, well-worn path running up the side of the ravine on the Whittaker place, and across the two or three barren fields. The cabin stood in an oasis-like spot in the midst of this barrenness, a tiny orchard of peach, apple, and wild-plum trees. Various sheds and log outhouses of rudest structure, — the handiwork of Zeb, — although out of repair, were clustered about it, and gave a homelikeness to the dull spot.

There were evidences that some one took an interest in the humble dwelling; for the two windows of the cabin were clean, and draped with fresh white curtains of "factory," as they called white muslin. They were edged with an elaborate home-made lace knit on needles, and mutely testified to the imperishable love of adornment in all of Eve's daughters.

A great bunch of "pineys" stood by the door, and snowball bushes grew on either side of the garden gate that led into the lane.

A shallow free-stone well, from which the water was drawn by a sweep, was near the kitchen door; and above it grew two cone-like juniper trees, which shaded the little milk-house, with the vegetable pit, like a great grave, near by.

The cabin proper had originally but one room, perhaps twenty feet square. On one side was a great chimney of sticks daubed with clay, and opposite was a rude partition of wood which did not reach to the ceiling. The narrow room thus cut off was Lucetta's special apartment, or, to speak more exactly, one end of it was hers, for the other was religiously held as the spare room. Tightly wedged in each corner was a bed piled high with feathers; and in Lucetta's was an old-fashioned chest of drawers of dark mahogany, the sole relic of some prosperous ancestor. Both beds were bedecked with valance and pillows profusely trimmed with lace, in the knitting of which Mrs. Whittaker whiled away the long winter days, and a home-

made blue-and-white counterpane reached to the valance. These white muslin, lace-trimmed valances were not wholly for ornament, but served to hide the jars of home-made preserves, honey, dried corn, and even boxes of clothing, stowed away under the beds.

The big room was a general sitting-room, and, though meagerly furnished, was kept neat and bright. The floor was covered with a gay rag carpet. Against the partition, opposite the fireplace, was Mrs. Whittaker's bed, draped and trimmed even more elaborately than the others, and in it she could be found most of the time, for she was a hopeless invalid, — "hypo" her neighbors expressed it. There really was some foundation for her invalid state; for at the birth of her third child she had suffered partial paralysis, and had never fully recovered, as one birth followed another rapidly. The death of all her children but the eldest fixed the habit of hypochondria; and she seldom left the house, her migrations being from her cushioned rocking-chair in the chimney-corner to her thick feather-bed. It was amazing that she had survived her life of inactivity so long, and it proved that originally she had been blessed with a strong constitution. In the neighborhood, sympathy for her had long been displaced by contemptuous pity.

In one angle of the sitting-room stood a really handsome mahogany corner cupboard, which had been part of Mrs. Whittaker's mother's wedding

portion, before she had come from Kentucky to the wilds of Indiana. Through its glass doors could be seen old green and blue dishes. A great chest of drawers with glass knobs stood near the window. The mantel above the fireplace was a rough board one, but it, too, was draped with a valance in keeping with the bed, and was further adorned by two tall brass candlesticks with brass snuffers and tray complete, a moon-faced clock, and a gorgeous peacock tail. There was also a row of suggestive vials of assorted sizes. Above all this array was a bracket of the antlers of a deer, — shot by Mrs. Whittaker's father in the "early day," — which held Zeb's rifle.

In the winter Lucetta did all the cooking at the fireplace, but in summer she used a cooking-stove with a top fashioned like two steps, which was set up in the "lean-to" kitchen that Zeb, after years of procrastination, had been prevailed on to build; for the Whittakers had lived on this spot for the twenty years since their marriage. True to the universal law governing such cases, the poorest farmer got the poorest farm; and Zeb was the man of all men to illustrate this truism. He cultivated the few fields in the slackest manner. His corn and wheat were always the last planted and harvested in the community. The kitchen garden, once ploughed, he turned over entirely to the care of his daughter. As the "lame and the lazy are always provided for," — a saying Mrs. Bowles sneeringly applied to Zeb, — he managed to ward off

starvation with the least possible labor. In this life, there seems to be a certain amount of homely duty apportioned to each person, which, if shirked, is only added to that of another who is faithful in the performance of his own share. It does not follow that because it is evaded by the one, it is not exacted of another to the uttermost.

Zeb had escaped, as nearly as man can, his share of the curse of Eden; he never worked hard enough to sweat, nor earned enough to keep him in bread. Not so the women of his household: his wife had brought forth many children in sorrow, and the bread he ate was from the sweat of his daughter's brow.

He ploughed and harrowed the fields, only because the girl was not strong enough, but she followed patiently in the furrows dropping the corn, which later she helped hoe, and in autumn gathered and "shucked." She cut the potatoes and planted them, and even followed after the sickle and bundled the wheat that Zeb leisurely cut. He had amazing faith in that Providence which provides for the idler, and planted only so much of a crop as would serve his needs till the next harvest, never giving thought to what a year might bring forth in the way of droughts or floods.

There was, however, a finer side to Zeb's nature, which showed itself in the exceeding neatness of his attire of common blue jeans. His going-abroad coat — of the shad-belly pattern — was a well-fitting one, adorned with bright brass buttons; his

trousers were shapely, and never bagged at the knees. Another of his higher traits was his love for his fiddle, on which he played with remarkable taste and feeling for one entirely untutored. With the sensitiveness of an artist, he shrank from misappreciation and indifference, and was shy of playing on it before people who did not love it as truly as he. Then, too, he was noted for his skill in ornamenting rough, home-made wagon beds, — which, it is needless to say, he had no part in making, — and was thought to have a nice taste in colors; his scrolls and flowers were the wonder and delight of his neighbors, who sought his services in that line. Somewhere back in Zeb's ancestral tree had flourished an artist, whose genius had filtered down through many generations to this humble scion, and showed itself paradoxically in bigger brushes and paint-pots.

Lucetta had mental and moral qualities — perhaps owing to a strong hereditary strain dormant in her parents — which neither her father nor her mother manifested. She had been forced gradually to assume responsibilities which were rightly theirs, thus in some measure reversing the attitudes of parent and child. Cut off by circumstances from intimate association with her neighbors, she was thrown much on her own resources. She would not accept the meagre hospitality of the community, because she could not in any way return it. Lack of companionship created the habit of introspection, and she became serious, thoughtful, and sedate be-

yond her years, and keenly alive to the marvelousness of common things about her. Her only real pleasure was drawn from a knowledge of the plants which grew in the ravine, and of the insects she fought in the kitchen garden, whose peculiarities and habits she knew better than those of her neighbors. She cherished aspirations to be and do more than her present life promised, but she kept her own counsel. It was not until the coming of Miss Abbot, the new teacher, that the first puff of destiny blew on this spark of ambition smouldering in her soul, like fire in punk that needs but a breath to set it aglow.

Such ambition in women is pitiful, since it is so rarely realized. For conscience throttles it in favor of a lowly but imperative duty, which neither elevates the performer nor rouses one whit of gratitude in those for whom the sacrifice is made, and by whom it is accepted as a matter of course.

When Miss Abbot came into the neighborhood, chance threw her and Lucetta together, and, notwithstanding twenty years' disparity in age, a friendship grew up between them.

It was then the custom in all the district schools of Indiana for the teacher to act as janitor, or pay for such service out of his own pocket. Miss Abbot had been told she might possibly get Zeb Whittaker to sweep out and build fires at the school-house, as it was not very far from his cabin. Zeb declined, but Lucetta offered to do the work in return for lessons in algebra, history, and gram-

mar, just after school, three evenings in the week. Miss Abbot became deeply interested in her, and Lucetta proved an apt pupil, doing so well that she hoped by next autumn to be able to secure a license and herself become a teacher, which was her cherished ambition. She saw, in the realization of her hopes, help and comforts for her sickly mother which she could not now command. She had long since ceased to expect anything of the rightful head of the family, and rarely gave a thought to his indolence, but took it as a matter of course; it was as much a part of his character as his good-nature.

Miss Abbot was a woman of strong character, sensible, independent, and fearless. She was a granddaughter of one of the educational pioneers of the State, who had come out from the East and founded a college in the heart of the primeval forest girdling the tiny settlement of Crofton. She possessed the qualities of her sire, pluck and perseverance, and was thoroughly well educated. Like him, she was an abolitionist of the blackest hue, but though she did not hide the fact, neither did she boast of it; and, being gifted with tact, she gave no offense even in Riffle Township, where such opinions were hotly opposed. She came into Lucetta's arid life, like a refreshing rain in the midst of a drought, at the moment of her greatest need.

Of late, Zeb had been neglecting his work even more than usual, and it was only by repeated urg-

ing that Lucetta moved him to break the ground for corn and for her garden, which provided the greater part of their food for the summer.

Instead of going to bed at nightfall as formerly, he left the house soon after supper and returned very late, and would sullenly evade their questioning as to his nocturnal jaunts.

For days after the meeting at Harv Wilson's cabin, Zeb sat over the fire brooding. He was one of those nerveless men that collapse mentally and physically when anything like responsibility falls upon them. During those hours of self-communion he was conscience-smitten; tortured by cowardly fears, he suffered to the depths of his shallow, faltering soul. But he was not clever enough to see that he had been the victim in the dealing of the lot, not inventive enough to evade it, nor energetic enough to run away. Like the craven he was, he made the innocent women of his household, ignorant of its cause, suffer with him, during the interval between the allotment and fulfillment of his terrible duty. Members of the "Vestibule" were the dupes and tools of the three higher orders of the Knights of the Golden Circle, and were not taken into confidence further than to make them useful. The real intentions and purposes of the higher degrees they never knew. They were intimidated by vague threats of vengeance, and placated by specious promises, to make them faithful and obedient.

A glimmering of the baseness of his ingratitude

penetrated Zeb's feeble brain, as the heinousness of such a crime did not; for Harv had inspired in him a fanatical ardor for "the cause," and he was not capable of more than one impression at a time. Abner Neal had always been his benefactor, and, when no one else would, he had accepted him as a tenant, and times without number had forgiven him his debt for the rent; he had often furnished him with the necessaries of life for the sake of his "women folks," before Lucetta was old enough to realize the shamefulness of his improvidence and put an end to it. But Abner Neal was a Union man, and had incurred the enmity of the order, and Zeb was to be the instrument of his punishment.

On this particular evening, early in May, Zeb sat tilted forward on the front legs of his splint-bottomed chair, huddling over the fire, wherein smouldered a backlog, now a mass of fleecy gray ashes that seemed always moving, under which, whenever a puff of wind blew the ashes aside, could be seen the heart of fire. He was slowly cracking each joint of his long bony fingers, the only thing he ever did industriously, and ruminating intently. As a rule, Lucetta gave little heed to his laggard ways, but his pale, blank eyes, in which vacancy usually dwelt, now had a look of distress that attracted her notice as he occasionally lifted them to her face. His nature was not strong enough to bear his burden alone, and Lucetta felt from this new expression that he was mutely asking for help.

"Pappy," she asked, "what 's the matter? Are you ailin'?"

"Not perticaler, but then I don't feel right peart."

After a pause he asked, "Lucetty, do you know what 'Arcturus' is?"

"Yes, Pappy, Arcturus is the name of a star; it means 'The Bear's Guard,' and it 's called that because it 's near The Great Bear, — a group of stars, you know, — and guards it. But what a queer question, Pappy!"

He ignored her surprise and said: "Means a guard, does it? Well, mebby so," shaking his head doubtfully, "mebby so. But what the devil does" — and he stopped suddenly, realizing that he was talking aloud, after the habit of people much alone.

"Did the teacher learn you all that, Lucetty? She knows a heap, don't she?" he asked, with an attempt at sprightliness and interest that did not deceive the girl, nor divert her attention from the glimpse she had of his trouble, betrayed by this unusual question. It at once aroused her suspicion, and made her anxious. Far more intelligent than he, she was able to deduce reasons and form opinions with surprising correctness.

The news of the call of the President for more men, and of the impending draft, had reached her in the weekly newspaper which Miss Abbot took, the only one except Abner Neal's that came to the community. She had heard, too, of the Order of

the Knights of the Golden Circle, but of their presence in the township she had not the slightest suspicion. They had not yet begun that series of petty crimes and flagrant lawlessness that harassed the Commonwealth so greatly. Why the prospective draft should distress her father she could not understand; for their township would escape, as the Union men of both parties had volunteered and filled its quota.

She watched him warily as she prepared their early supper, and when he ate sparingly of the homely meal of cold greens, young onions, corn-bread, and rhubarb pie, — all favorite dishes with him, — she was convinced something more than usual was amiss.

Toward dusk he grew more nervous, and took his cap off its peg and said: —

"Well, Lucetty, I 've got to go over to the blacksmith shop — to see about — a " — (he hesitated, his dull wits unused to inventing excuses) — "to see about mendin' the ploughshare."

Lucetta well knew it was sticking in the furrow intact.

"It seems to me it would do just as well to take it to him to-morrow, seeing he don't work nights."

Made suspicious through his fears, he regarded this innocent speech as an intentional sneer.

"That 's none o' your business, Lucetty. You ain't got no right to talk to your pap that-a-way."

He took down his gun and departed, trembling from his unusual outbreak. He rarely spoke in

anger to Lucetta, and she wonderingly watched him taking the short cut across the ravine to the smithy, which lay half a mile south on the Ridgely road.

"What ails him, I wonder? Something 's come over him, certain."

"He 's just like all men-folkses," observed her mother in a peevish little voice, from the depths of her rocking-chair. "When they git a chance, they 're just as gosterin' and masterful as they can be. Him a-goin' off that-a-way, and me a feelin' that bad with such a misery in my stummick!" and she moaned in self-pity.

Lucetta, accustomed to such complaints, asked absently from the doorway: —

"Are you feelin' poorly, mammy?"

She had great sympathy for her mother, and believed devoutly in all her aches and pains. She went quickly to her, when a groan was her only answer.

"Do you want your ginseng bitters, or boneset tea, mammy?" she asked solicitously.

Mrs. Whittaker had eaten heartily of their heavy supper, her not infrequent habit, notwithstanding her invalid state, and, writhing in real pain now, groaned out: —

"Oh, such a misery!"

Lucetta hastily hung the kettle on the crane, and threw chips on the drowsing fire to heat water, and she soon made ready the simple remedies she used in such attacks. But they brought no relief,

all failed now, and Lucetta was really alarmed as the hours passed and her mother became paler and more deathly sick.

When the clock struck eleven, Zeb had not returned, and Lucetta said: —

"Mammy, I 've done all I can. Do you think you 'd be afraid to stay alone while I run over to Rush's to get some one to go for the doctor? Maybe I 'll have to go on to Ridgely myself, if Alec ain't home, but I 'll get Mrs. Rush to stay with you if I do."

Her mother nodded an assent, and the girl swiftly left the house, tying on her sun-bonnet. The moon was on the wane, and gave but little light to brighten her path through the fields.

On reaching Rush's, Lucetta found no men there, but Mrs. Rush, usually an arrant coward, was moved to pity by the girl's anxiety, — which from long habit she thought quite unnecessary, — and went back with her to stay with her mother, while Lucetta continued on her errand alone.

CHAPTER VIII

"THE LONE STAR"

LUCETTA took the path down the ravine, and, when she reached the place where her canoe was tied up, quickly unfastened it and poled off into mid-stream. In that neighborhood, where the farms lay along the creek, a very common mode of travel was by canoes, which were in as constant use for locomotion as horses. Every family owned one or more; even the children were skilled in handling them, a very delicate operation.

Lucetta stood in the middle, tall and straight, dipping her long paddle deftly and evenly. She was soon in the strong current, and it swept her along so rapidly that it took little effort on her part except to keep off the huge boulders, which now and then stuck their gray crowns out of the water.

The stream ran between rolling fields on one hand and high bluffs, broken at frequent intervals by ravines, on the other. The bluffs were black in the shadow of the balsam and pine. The night was very silent, except for the recurring screech of an owl, which sounded sadly, or when a frog shrieked in dismay as it plunged from a boulder

mid-stream; and the water swung along with a deep cadence, like a low-pitched human voice, hushing the finer silvery tones of the spring branches that emptied into it. None of these night sounds disturbed Lucetta, for to her they were as familiar as the voices of friends. The "old moon," hung in a sky full of cloud-hummocks, was hardly risen to the treetops; its light fell feebly, scarcely piercing through them to the shadowed stream. But Lucetta knew its channel as well in the dark as in the light, for it was the shortest route to the village, and she nearly always made use of it. After paddling two miles down-stream, she made a landing above the riffle, at the ford of the Ridgely road, to take the path on the edge of the wood, which led to the village, still a half mile away, where the doctor lived.

As she clambered up the short, steep bank into the wood, the clouds that had been obscuring the sky suddenly cleared, and, with head up in the effort of reaching the summit, she saw a gleam of something bright in the top of an oak-tree that stood somewhat apart from the rest of the forest, where it had been thinned to let in the sunshine along the edge of a wheat field. At any other time her curiosity would have been aroused to learn the cause of that mysterious shining, but now anxiety swallowed up every other feeling. She took the foot-path just within the wood, close by the fence that bounded the field. In the middle of the wood the night noises reasserted themselves, dispelling

her distress, and filling her with nervous dread of she knew not what, a dread that swiftly turned to fear when an appalling cry broke the silence, seeming to come from the black depths beyond her. The dull seesawing of crickets, the varied croaking of frogs, the shuddering cry of the lich-owl, have no greater terrors for a country girl than the homely crow of cocks, which were now telling the hour from farmstead to farmstead. But this cry, which seemed that of neither man nor brute, stopped her blood with a clutch at her heart, and stayed her feet on the path.

It wailed out weirdly, not loud, but far-reaching: —

"O—a—k—houn!"

"What is it? What is it?" she whispered, appealing to that stronger self to which we go for cheer or courage when our every-day self is baffled and discomfited. Some instinct warned her of danger and suggested hiding. A few yards ahead of her, in a corner, on both sides of the rail fence, a tangle of wild-gooseberry bushes grew, on which the young leaves were just putting forth. As she stood that instant in the path, holding counsel with herself, the cry was repeated many times, far and faint, from all directions. She made her way swiftly to the clump of bushes, and, creeping behind this prickly covert into the fence corner, waited for a revelation, or a return of tranquillity. The moon was now bright overhead. Its marred proportions added to the mournfulness of the night,

and afforded a mild illumination to the path and the trees bordering it, but made the dense shade of those beyond her seem blacker by contrast.

She was hardly hidden when a man came quickly and noiselessly down the path in the direction to which she was bound; others, from the creek; three or four appeared from the gloom of the wood, until a company of nearly a dozen had gathered under the great oak where the strange light glittered. One, who seemed to be the leader of this mysterious band, shifted his position so that the moonlight fell on his face, and Lucetta saw Harv Wilson.

"What can it mean? Why do they come here in the night?" she said to herself.

Then she saw his companions go through singular motions with hands and arms and feet, and utter strange gibberish. The words she could not hear distinctly, but the gestures she could easily follow, especially those of Harv Wilson, who stood a little apart. He placed the heel of his right foot in the hollow of the left, and the right hand under the left arm; then, changing the position of his arms, folded them and placed the four fingers of his left hand on the right arm, and those of the right hand on the left arm, with serious gravity, in perfect silence. He was imitated by all present except one solitary spectator. Then, with a wave of his arm, Harv dismissed them into the depths of the woods, except the looker-on. He engaged him in a pantomime somewhat different. Each took the

other's right hand in an ordinary grip, and placed the left hand on the other's breast; then shifted the right hand to the other's wrist, and straightened the thumb out on it. The wind, veering, carried to her words uttered in Harv's coarse voice, which, in attempting to subdue, he made more distinct. "If I go to the east" — he said and paused, while another voice of finer timbre completed the sentence, — "I will go to the west. Let there be no strife" — he, too, abruptly stopped, and Harv took it up, "between mine and thine — (pause) — "for we," resumed the other voice, "be brethren," with strong emphasis on "be."

"Resistance to tyrants," said Harv, — "is obedience to God," the other man concluded, which seemed to satisfy Harv, for with that the colloquy ended.

They set out to follow their companions into the woods, and the unknown man lifted his hat from his head and wiped his brow with a dark handkerchief. As he did so, his features were revealed clearly enough for her to see that they were unfamiliar.

There was a slight twittering in the bushes, as of birds disturbed in sleep, and all was still. With amazement and dread Lucetta witnessed this mysterious rite under the oak-tree. She had beheld a dozen men engaged in this ceremony, and had seen the faces of but two, and, if called upon to do so, could have identified Harv's only. The others turned their backs, as if intentionally hiding their

faces. She had no inkling of the strange scene, but, knowing well the lawless character of Harv Wilson, was convinced it boded nothing good. It was with profound relief she welcomed the silence that proved them out of hearing, but it was with a thrill of greater terror that she saw a sturdy, boyish figure rise from the field-side of her ambush, leap the fence, and noiselessly follow Harv and his comrades into the darkness.

Lucetta waited a short time, in affrighted surprise, to be certain she was unobserved, then climbed into the field, to have the fence for a barrier between her and any other mysterious thing that might cross her path, and crouchingly made her way to the road, running swiftly.

When she reached the doctor's home she found he was out, and left word for him, on his return, to come as quickly as possible. She took no one into her confidence in regard to her strange experience, but hastily retraced her steps homeward by the same wood-path, not without rigors of fear. She reached the canoe unmolested, and was unloosing it, when she almost shrieked aloud as a voice called softly: —

"Hold on there!" and a man came hastily down the shallow bank from the willows where he had been under cover.

"Don't be frightened! Aren't you Lucy?"

"Yes," she answered sharply, "but you"?—

"Don't you know my voice? It's Frank."

She had not seen Frank since his return on a

furlough nearly a month ago, except at the church the day of the violent scene.

"How did you come here at this time of night?" she asked, her voice vibrating nervously.

"That's what I've got to know from you," he said, by way of reply, as he righted the canoe. "Step in," he said, almost as if giving a military command. "It'll be safer to talk in the canoe. I'll paddle her."

Lucetta had not recovered her composure enough to resist, and mechanically obeyed. Frank himself stepped in, and, standing lusty and upright, pushed off, exerting all his strength against the opposing current. When they were out of sight and beyond hearing of any chance loiterer, he said earnestly: —

"Lucy, do you love your State, and do you care for the boys in blue?" He paused an instant, but, before she could reply, continued: "If you do, don't speak a word to any one of what you have seen to-night till I ask you."

"Why should n't I?" she inquired wonderingly.

"It is of the greatest importance it should n't be known. There are reasons that I cannot explain, and if you tell now you 'd be worse than a traitor. Give me your promise," he demanded earnestly.

"I promise, Frank."

He paddled strongly against the brawling current, impeded by a big boulder, and, when in smoother water, pulled in to the shore to a dark

spot under the over-hanging evergreens, and lay to a moment.

"Now, Lucy, tell me what brought you out at such an hour."

She told him, and added urgently, "Oh, Frank, let us go. Poor mammy needs me."

Frank was as skeptical as every one else in regard to "mammy," and made no reply to her appeal.

"I saw you coming down the path," he said, "and never was more surprised in my life, for I thought only men were in it. But there 's more than one woman, I find."

"In what, Frank?"

"Never you mind. I can't tell you now, Lucy. I 'm as good as on oath not to. You 'll know soon enough. Things are coming to pass within the next two or three months, in this old Hoosier State, that will surprise you."

With a few sturdy strokes, the canoe was again in mid-stream, and soon after tied up at its own landing.

CHAPTER IX

MRS. WHITTAKER VINDICATED

For once, Mrs. Whittaker's illness proved to be real. When Lucetta reached home, she found her mother attended only by Mrs. Rush. Zeb had not yet returned from his mysterious absence, but came shortly, and was stunned into even greater uselessness by his wife's serious state. When the doctor arrived, he found his patient in a condition in which his ministerings availed nothing, and before morning Mrs. Whittaker vindicated her claim to being an invalid by dying.

The news of her death spread about the neighborhood with amazing speed, and, strangely enough, was a shock to the people, who had been in the habit of saying, in regard to her ailments, "A creaking door hangs longest." The women hastened to offer their help, which had been so rarely proffered in her lifetime, and with which Lucetta would gladly have dispensed. There was an unwritten law against her performing the last offices for the dead. It was thought unfitting that she should straighten the lifeless limbs whose staff and stay she had been so long; should fold the smooth hands in whose tender care hers had been

roughened; should comb the long hair, still so bright and abundant, which, with daughterly pride, she had kept tidy and beautiful; should enrobe for the last time that paralyzed body she had dressed for years as faithfully as a mother tends her babe. None of these services were seemly now, and Lucetta could not but reflect bitterly on the display of tardy kindness that had forced her to yield them into strangers' hands. It was with pain that she resigned herself to unkind custom to sit idly apart in her tiny bedroom.

The sound of women's voices, subdued but cheerful, and the clatter of cooking utensils, reached her there, and Lucetta realized sadly there was no grief in any heart but her own. She sorrowed for the dead, not as a child for a mother, but as a mother over a helpless creature, who, for some physical or mental lack, is left to her sole cherishing, after the cruel wont of mankind. From childhood, Lucetta had assumed the burdens of that feeble, complaining mother, and indulged her childish whims. The strongest interest of the woman's life was "herb doctorin'," and it was among Lucetta's greatest pleasures, so pitifully few, to secure materials for her decoctions. As soon as the sap crept upward in the spring, she dug the sassafras root, and later stripped the tender green spicewood twigs of their bark to make her fragrant teas and coax a sickly appetite. From the crystal thread of the stream in the ravine, she gathered sweet, cool-breathed mints, and she despoiled the boggy

places of calamus. She plucked the odorous pennyroyal from under the beeches in the wood, and hunted in secluded spots for the rare ginseng; found "boneset" and sarsaparilla for her bitters; dried bunches of catnip and hoarhound; and in August picked the coral partridge-berries. When the leaves fell in the autumn, she climbed the steep sunny side of the ravine to rob the sumach of its flaming seed-cones, and from its near neighbor, the wahoo, pillaged the pink twin-capsuled berries. She planted herbs in her garden, sage and thyme, camomile and rue, for her use. These she garnered for winter and stored in the shallow loft above the sitting-room, till the cabin reeked with mingled odors of roots and herbs. All were beneficent agents which ministered to both mother and daughter, though in widely different ways. Lucetta was thus brought into a close, earnest study of nature; and a mind so occupied has no room for sordid thoughts or petty schemings, for Nature washes its tablets clean with her dews and showers, and writes on it the story of her mysterious enchantments.

Lucetta was so familiar with the haunts and growth of all these homely simples that in later years they furnished a sort of humble calendar to her mother's memory. The lengthening days of February reminded her of sassafras time; if she trod on mint and crushed from it a pungent breath, her thoughts flew back to those bygone days; and so throughout the year to autumn's last offering.

The day of the funeral fell on Sunday, and was one of unusual activity for the self-constituted helpers, who, without realizing it, were making it a day of recreation. It was a time of universal leisure; funeral guests would come from far and near, and must be fed. In the early morning hours, bustling sounds reached Lucetta, and brought with them the mortifying conviction that the neighbors must have brought the provision for the feast from their own homes. She surmised that the fine cloth to be used on the table had been borrowed from "Neal's folks," who were known to possess the best in the neighborhood.

The women inspected Lucetta's wardrobe, and openly criticised its paucity and unfitness for the occasion; but finally settled among themselves that her brown delaine would do to wear to the funeral, if some one would lend her a black shawl and a hat, for she possessed only a hood and sun-bonnet. The one was borrowed from Mrs. Rush, the other from Liddy Ann Collins.

During the dreary funeral services, the women crowded into the little sitting-room "to see how the mourners took it," for they had more curiosity than sympathy. The men found seats on the top of the garden fence, and in subdued voices talked of their spring work, and speculated as to when the draft would begin, and who would be the polling officer in Honey Creek Township, till the discussion grew so heated they lost sight of the occasion; the mention of the draft in Riffle or

Honey Creek townships was like shaking a red rag before a bull.

It was a relief to Lucetta's sensitive nature when the clay effigy of what had been her lifelong care was laid away forever, — when the feast was eaten and these unwelcome guests were gone.

Her only comfort had been found in the kindness of Miss Abbot during all these trying hours; her after-impression of the time was one of painful confusion.

The day following the funeral Lucetta keenly realized her loss, as she went about the task of restoring order to the house. One by one she emptied the bottles of nostrums, — the kettle of boneset tea that had been forgotten, the jug of bitters by the hearth, — and often in imagination heard the querulous voice calling her to do some needless errand. She started at the emptiness of the deep, wooden rocking-chair, as if she saw a shrunken, ghostly form among its pillows. Her day of servitude was over; the work of her hands and heart was taken from her.

But who can measure her debt to that feeble mother, or know how greatly she was beholden to her for the development of the virtues of patience and self-sacrifice, endurance and courage, and for the self-reliance which was afterward so painfully tested? Even her love of knowledge, cramped by circumstance, sprang into lustier life because of enforced restraint.

Lucetta's was one of those minds that seem the

florescence of a commonplace race. Long denied the opportunity for improvement and culture, she had already reached the time when her intellect demanded more than it could obtain in her present mode of life. Then fortune sent her the plain, homely spinster school-teacher. In her Lucetta found the friend she needed, and for two troubled winters she had studied with her so faithfully that she had reached with infinite difficulty the heights of Parnassus where algebra and history dwelt, to the awe and disapproval of the neighbors. They regarded such ambition in "weemen" as sinful, and indulged in spiteful and slighting speeches concerning her audacious aspirations, while feeling a secret pride in her success as reflecting credit on them locally. But Mrs. Bowles had recognized something different in her from the girls in the neighborhood, and had said: —

"You need n't talk! you can't balk Nature! The girl 's got it in her and it 's bound to come out, like the measles, or kill her. But where she gets it from I can't see, with such folks! It 's like goin' to a goat's house for wool!"

On Monday night following the funeral, when Miss Abbot came to her and asked her to take her to board, she did a kinder thing even than she had intended, and took down the first rail in the "gap" that led Lucetta out from the barren ground of her old existence into the broad, fertile fields of the new.

Life is a series of adjustments to varying condi-

tions. Lucetta gladly consented, and the next day the cabinet organ found a place in the living-room, the schoolmistress was put into possession of the "spare-room" end of the little long bedroom, and the new life had begun.

CHAPTER X

THE POLLING OFFICER

Two days after Mrs. Whittaker's funeral, it was known the length and breadth of the township that polling for the draft had begun, in compliance with the call of the President for 300,000 men. It had been an inevitable measure, which was required to fill the places of those whose term of enlistment had expired. In some sections of Indiana, the spirit of opposition to the draft was so strong that only a leader was needed to organize the malcontents and encourage them to break into open violence; failing which, individuals wreaked it on the man appointed to the dangerous work of polling. Nowhere was this spirit more bitter than in Riffle and Honey Creek townships, which lay adjacent, and whose eligible loyal men were already in the service. Those in authority in the county were perfectly aware of the fact, and for that reason, when the officer started on his rounds, very few in Riffle Township knew who had been selected for the dangerous mission. In the month he had been at home, Frank had not sufficiently recovered from the hardships of Andersonville to rejoin his regiment, and, at his earnest solicitation, he had been

given the appointment of polling officer for these two disaffected townships.

When rumors of a draft settled into a certainty, its opponents throughout the State were roused to frenzy: secret meetings of the Knights and their sympathizers were held, and a call was made for a convention at the capital, ostensibly in the name of the Democratic party; in reality, by the Knights of the Golden Circle. Harv Wilson and Jake Zerfus, who had represented respectively the Temples in Honey Creek and Riffle townships, had not yet reported the ludicrous outcome of this convention, which was put to rout in the midst of seditious utterances, insidious boasts, and malignant threats, which had been made possible by the acts of a Supreme Court that had hampered the governor in every way known to legal chicanery and personal opposition. Nor had this retired community yet read of the battle of Pogue's Run, that farcical and bloodless engagement wherein those Knights, who had not fled in a panic, surrendered to a company of volunteers all the arms they had not hidden in the women's skirts, or thrown into the classic "Run."

It was known in every Temple of the State, however, that their idol, Vallandigham, had been ignominiously sent through the lines, and that the secessionists had repudiated him, so that he had retreated to the protecting soil of Canada, there to send out his manifestoes as Supreme Commander, and, there unmolested, to work out his schemes.

It was a lovely morning in early June, — the wheat was beginning to head; the corn, which had been planted earliest, was already peeping up in small, sharp blades; the grass in the fence corners was so high it would have furnished a snug covert for little boys playing at hide-and-seek, were such impious pranks permitted in the fields.

Abner Neal's cornfield, a goodly one of forty acres, lay beside a wheat-field nearly as large; both stretched from the Crofton road almost to the creek. The Neal home-farm was a tract of three hundred acres, and the house lay to the northeast of these fields; one corner of it was cut across by the Honey Creek, on which stood the Whittaker cabin, which could also be seen from this point. When a canoe could not be used, the people took to the foot-paths through the fields, which, like the British yeomanry, they considered as much theirs as the highway itself, and no one ever questioned their right to use them. They were left open to the public, like the English by-paths, by right of long holding, and many of them were the original Indian trails. Such a path ran along the border of the Neal cornfield through the wheat-field to the house. Of late it was seldom trodden, for political differences had raised bitter rancor among neighbors. As the Neals were outspoken Unionists, and nearly every one in the vicinity of the opposite creed politically, they were not visited, except by a few "War Democrats," who were hated as renegades, even more than the Unionists,

by the third and stronger party, called "Butternuts" or "Copperheads." These last, by reason of their superior numbers, and the machinations of such men as Harv Wilson, had grown bold and insolent, and openly made coarse and malignant threats. The results of this malevolence were to bring the small remnant of Union men and War Democrats into closer affiliation for mutual help and protection if need be, and the organization of the Home Guard.

Frank had set out early on his rounds, and found angry or dispirited groups discussing the polling, and it was difficult to get names of eligible men under such conditions.

It was not without serious misgivings that Frank's parents had seen him begin the work of enrollment, for they knew the temper of their neighbors better than he, and dreaded something worse than insult. He, however, felt no fear, for he was a daring, reckless fellow, and familiarity with real danger made him contemptuous of their threats. He forgot that the foe in ambush is deadlier than an open enemy. He trusted to the fact that he had been reared among them to save him from personal violence. But in any case he had resolved to do his whole duty, — a lesson he had learned on battle-fields, on long marches, and in camp.

It can hardly be said that Frank had been actuated by the highest patriotism when he had enlisted the day after his graduation. A whirl of

excitement had swept over the college, and nearly depleted it. One of Frank's classmates had raised a company, and the entire senior class had distinguished itself on Commencement Day by laying aside the diploma and taking up the musket.

Frank had gone into the war thinking it a matter of a few months, as did most raw recruits on both sides. Vainglorious, self-confident, chafing under restraint of the authority of his superior officer, who was his college chum, he longed to burst into the fray undisciplined by drill, certain of victory, — forgetting that his foe was of the same blood, the same mind, the same desires, though not of a common cause. Long months of discouragement and defeat had taught him at length a soldier's duty; he had learned thoroughly the hardships of war. With two years' service had come a full realization of all that the nation had at stake, and how fierce would be the struggle to save it. Enthusiasm yielded to a stubborn determination to conquer or die, — "to fight to the last ditch," with that dogged persistence of the Anglo-Saxon which never lets him know when he is beaten; a spirit which prolonged the struggle between the opposing armies of the same race in the Civil War.

On a gentle slope in the road running beside Abner Neal's cornfield, three coffee-nut trees towered like campaniles capped with belfries of fluttering greenery, where the oriole swung its nest and played at bell-ringer, and the rain-crow tolled its solemn note before a storm. These noble trees

had been exiled from the woods, gashed by hollows and dark with coppice, that skirted the opposite side of the road. Their feathery tops cast a circle of shade many feet to the westward, but gave little shelter to a small group of men gathered there, talking eagerly together, and with some heat, as was shown by their disturbed countenances. At the far end of the cornfield, Abner Neal's farm-hand, Sam Truax, was starting in on his third furrow; early as it was, he had already crossed the field and back again. Not far from him stood Abner Neal himself, leaning over the fence inspecting his wheat, which was heading, and speculating how soon he would be able to cut it. Both were within calling distance of the road, but out of sight of it owing to the rolling nature of the field. Two or three rods down the furrow would bring Sam to the top of the rise, and into full view of the men on the road.

Along this field-path Lucetta was walking, coming from Neal's, where she had gone to return the table-cloth; for the neighbors who had taken the liberty, without consulting her, to borrow many things to grace the funeral feast, had not been equally ready to return them. The men under the coffee-nut trees were Jim Swazey, Mick Gavin (who owned thirty acres of bottom-land adjoining Neal's, and the rough wood-lot at hand), and Dan Cruze, a farmer who lived on Buck Creek. They were looking down the road, and their backs were toward Lucetta, so that they were not aware of

her presence. Nearly the length of the field lay between her and Sam Truax and Abner Neal. As she was about to climb the fence separating her from the road, she caught sight of a figure coming toward them, which the men were watching, and she heard Jim Swazey say vindictively: —

"You 've got to get that book away from him if you have to kill him. Them 's Harv's orders."

Lucetta dropped into the fence corner and waited, in a quandary, not knowing what she should do.

"We don't want to do no violence, young feller," said Cruze to Jim, "but we 've got to have that book and no mistake."

"I 'm not carin' how you get it, boys," said Jim, his malignant eyes fastened on the man approaching; "one damned black abolitionist more sent to hell don't matter much."

As he spoke he drew a revolver from the inside pocket of his coat, snapped the trigger suggestively, and after fitting a cap replaced it half-cocked. By this time the man was within hailing distance, and Swazey recognized him. Rankling under the insult at church, he said: —

"By heaven, it 's that damned 'Lincoln dog'! If you weaken, I 'll do the job myself."

Lucetta heard this speech plainly, and was shaken with fear, but not for herself. True to her long training, the tremor of fright passed, she cast about for the help which she realized she herself was powerless to give, and recalled having seen

Abner Neal and Sam Truax across the field. The fence afforded her covert, and she ran half its length, then crawled on hands and knees down the furrow below the dip till out of sight, when she sped fleetly over the rough ground and reached Neal, to whom she gasped out her story. He said nothing to her, but called to Sam that Frank was in danger, told him to follow, and rushed to the rescue. Sam quickly unfastened the chain traces to loose the plough and sprang on the horse's back, Lucetta, meantime, explaining the situation.

"I'm a Democrat, but I'll be everlastingly blasted if I'll see murder done!" cried Sam.

Digging his heels into the horse's sides, and lashing him with the lines, the next instant he was racing madly down the furrows, with the chain traces jangling and showers of earth spurned from the horse's flying hoofs.

Frank had reached the group by the roadside. He wore his uniform, and, as he paused, pushed back his cap to wipe the sweat from his forehead, still pale and hollow at the temples from his three months' imprisonment.

Gavin stepped close to him, and without any preliminary greeting said: —

"We want that book, man, and by the Holy Saints we 're goin' to have it! We want it peaceable loike, ye understan'. So give ut over, will yez?"

Frank made no reply, but squeezed the poll-book tight under his left arm, and leaned against the

fence, searching warily for a loose rail; for he was without other weapon than the slender stick he had used for a staff, not thinking it necessary to arm himself against his own neighbors.

Cruze stepped forward twirling a green oak club which he had cut for a weapon.

"Yes, we 've got to have it, and if you don't give it up quietly we 'll take it!" he said.

Cruze was afraid to seize the book, but still more afraid not to make some sort of an attempt to obtain it, terrorized by the threats of Harv Wilson, who, by virtue of his power as Commander of their Temple, had appointed him to this task.

"I 'm sorry I can't oblige you," said Frank, with provoking suavity. "It is n't mine, — belongs to Oliver Perry Morton. Perhaps you 've heard of him? If you have n't, you will. He only lent it to me for a while, and I 'm expected to return it in good order, and" — with a change from his bantering tone, — "I fully intend to do so."

He pressed the book closer and twirled his stick carelessly as he coolly scanned the three irate faces before him, with an expression that warned while it defied them.

The Irishman's countenance expressed admiration for his pluck; the farmer's, ludicrous helplessness; and Swazey's, murderous rage.

"Men," said Frank, in a calm, even voice, "if you get this book it will be from my dead body!"

There was no bravado in words or manner; nothing but an earnestness that carried conviction.

An instant of profound silence followed, during which, had they given it attention, a jingling sound could have been heard. Then Swazey, raging like a mad beast, with fearful oaths, screamed stridently: —

"I'll have it, or I'll skin the hide off of you and hang it on the fence!"

"Well, sir," said Frank coolly, with simulated affability, "I've got that article with me right now, and I'll take great pleasure — in shooting you," — and he paused sufficiently to emphasize his contempt — "in the back!"

"Holy Mother, there 'll be murther done!" screamed the Irishman, as Swazey, goaded and enraged beyond endurance, reached for his revolver. Before he could draw it, there was a frightful crash and a horse plunged through the fence, scattering the rails, and the next instant trampling the murderous ruffian under his feet before Sam could pull up.

The other two men, fearing arrest, vanished like spirits into the wood, and were soon lost in the underbrush.

After Lucetta had made sure of Frank's safety, she took another way home, that his enemies might not know of her share in bringing him help.

CHAPTER XI

OVERHEARD

THROUGHOUT the remainder of the day, during the solitary hours which followed, Lucetta, having recovered from her agitation, thought over the affair, and wisely resolved to say nothing of the attempted assault on Frank. She was beginning to realize that it was an easy matter to become an object of suspicion and persecution in that locality, and it was not difficult for her to keep it a secret, since she was unused to making confidences. Such disclosures are largely a matter of habit, and are the effort of a weak nature to throw off burdens which a lax mind, like flaccid muscles, refuses to bear.

Lucetta had instinctively kept her thoughts and aspirations to herself, as a matter of no moment to her mother, whose interests had centred in her ailments to the exclusion of everything else; and she knew they were above the sympathetic comprehension of her father. In this respect she was one of "the solitary set in families." Suppression was her lifelong habit, and she now hid in her inmost heart the feelings of relief and thankfulness she felt at being able to help Frank, even conceal-

ing from herself the fact that she had been the instrument to deliver him, perhaps, from great danger.

For the next day or two thereafter, she busied herself with readjusting her household on the new footing; and Zeb employed himself in desultory ploughing in the sterile field.

But on the following Friday her father did not appear at their early dinner, much to Lucetta's surprise, for he usually came at that hour as faithfully as the clock-hand on the dial. His alacrity in this matter was equaled only by that of his two dogs, — Bose, a lank, black hound, and Dandy, a tyrannizing spaniel, which made the big dog wretched by petty bickerings that he could not in honor resent. The situation between these animals was much like that betwéen a big, patient man and his small, shrewish wife; and it was touching to see the gentle submission of Bose to the caprices of Dandy, and his gratitude for any condescending favor from him, as that, for instance, of resigning the "clabber" trough when he (Dandy) had no appetite for it. On this day they came in from the field panting from the exertion of rabbit-coursing, and crestfallen from having been ordered to the house; but no master came with them.

The schoolmistress carried her dinner with her, as it was too far for her to walk to and from the schoolhouse at noon. And, moreover, it was an unwritten law that the teacher should stand sen-

tinel over her pupils during the nooning; otherwise the building might suffer in the riots that would surely follow in her absence.

At five o'clock Miss Abbot came from school, while Lucetta was busy getting supper, and before the meal was ready Zeb, too, came slouching in. Not a stroke of work had he done that afternoon, for Lucetta had walked to the top of the field and had seen the plough standing in the furrow, and the horse was gone as well as the master.

"Why did n't you come to dinner, pappy?" asked Lucetta.

"Had to go to the blacksmith shop," he answered.

Then Lucetta knew that he had probably heard of Frank's trouble, for the shop was the point from which all the neighborhood gossip disseminated, and it required more than nine days to wear out so rich a theme. She waited in some anxiety to learn if he knew of the part she had taken in it, but with his usual reticence he told her nothing.

For some time after the meal, he sat over the hot ashes in the fireplace, — where, from long usage not yet affected by Mrs. Whittaker's death, a log still smouldered, — smoking his cob pipe, and puffing the smoke up the wide throat of the chimney. On his vacant face there was as much distress as it was capable of expressing, and deep trouble lay in the murky eyes. Before Lucetta had finished her evening chores, he took his cap from its peg and stole away again without excuse.

Lucetta threw a few chips on the fire and tidily brushed the hearth with a turkey wing, as the last task for the evening. When she turned to hang the wing up in the chimney-corner, she saw Mrs. Rush's black shawl, neatly folded, lying on the chest near by.

"Oh, there 's Mrs. Rush's shawl. I must take it home to-night. I 'll be too busy to-morrow, and she 'll need it Sunday, as there 's meeting at 'Liberty.' Do you want to go, too, Miss Abbot?"

It was a black challis shawl of light weight, which showed a ghostly pattern of the original florid design, in spite of its dip into the dye-kettle; it was considered an indispensable article of toilet for public occasions, and no matron was ever seen abroad without one in that neighborhood.

In reply to Lucetta's invitation, Miss Abbot said: —

"Not to-night, Lucetta. I 've had rather a hard day in school; I 'm truly glad it 's out next week. I 'll sit by the fire for a little while, then I 'll go to bed."

The evening was chill from the heavy mist that rose from the creek, and the cheerful crackle of the flames and the pungent odor of the sap stewing from the handful of green chips were pleasant to this lonely woman, and the homely but tidy cabin was the most cheerful refuge she had known for many a day. A restful tarrying by this quiet hearth seemed a most desirable good, and she

declined the visit, well knowing Lucetta did not fear to go alone the short distance between the two houses.

Lucetta herself was not sorry to have a solitary walk, and she set out by a short cut across the fields.

The sun was just sinking, and as it reached the horizon it seemed to drop with incredible swiftness from the rim of the earth, and, even while she gazed, it shot like a plummet down through unknowable spaces, leaving an interval of faltering light from the afterglow that flickered and faded into gray twilight, then suddenly gave place to the darkness of a starlit night. As often happens after sundown, a wind sprang up, as if speeding the parting guest, which set the tops of the high trees in motion, and sent the clouds racing like white-caps on an overhead sea. Then the stars went out like candles at a puff of breath, and before Lucetta reached the field behind the shop it was quite dark and threatened rain. A heavy gate, fastened by a hook to the corner of the shop, led into the road, and the rear of the building served in place of the missing sections of fence. As Lucetta paused to lift the hook, she at once became aware of voices inside the shop; words reached her, and of such purport that, when she had grasped their meaning, she was filled with terror.

"Yes, he 'll be put out of the way to-morrow night, the damned black abolitionist! He 'll not

get a chance to do any more of his cursed spying this side of hell!"

It was one of those booming bass voices that cannot be subdued, and it carried far in the stillness of the evening. In the reply she recognized Jim Swazey's tones, but so indistinct was his speech she could not catch his meaning.

"You don't think the white-livered hound 'll weaken when it comes to the pinch?" asked Jim's companion.

Swazey uttered a cruel laugh, and spoke louder in his savage excitement.

"He knows he can't. It 's as much as his hide 's worth. Cuss his worthless carcass! We 've had a hell of a time with him anyway! But we 've made him understand he 's between the Devil and the deep sea, with chances in favor of the Devil." And he concluded with a string of fierce oaths.

"'T would n't be much loss to us, nor gain to the Old Nick. Why, he 's so infernal lazy he 'd let a cat pull him away from his own fireplace, and would n't do nothin'," said the other man, and he laughed at his own joke, Swazey joining in.

"He 'll do the job!" declared Swazey. "You bet! He 'll have to. There 'll be some there that 'll see to it. It 's either Abner Neal's life or his, and he knows it pretty well. I 've had to lay low ever since the row, and he 's had Gavin and Cruze both put in jail at Crofton."

Lucetta, screened by the big gate, with infinite

relief heard them come out and close the door, and, after a moment's parleying, walk off down the road.

She was aware that the feeling against the war and the draft was bitter in the neighborhood, and that the resident abolitionists were hated, but she did not know the lengths to which the feeling had gone, — the secret organizations that had been formed, with their plots for assassination and arson. She knew of the existence of such societies in other parts of the State, and in Ohio and Illinois. In the past week, she had read in the school-teacher's weekly "Tribune" of the great danger which threatened the whole State of Indiana, that impeached its loyalty and harassed the great war governor. With a flash of woman's quick intuition, worth in a crisis whole days of slow reasoning, she put the facts together, and knew that the thing called treason confronted her in the despicable guise of assassination. What was the measure of her responsibility? Could she, without blood-guiltiness, let the innocent suffer? Would she not be an accessory to murder if she did not prevent it? But how?

She waited until the sound of footsteps had ceased, and during the interval took her resolution. Her self-dependence and habits of promptitude helped her to decide what was her duty, and, after she had settled it with her own conscience, she no more thought of shirking it than of snuffing out the solitary star that shone amid the clouds

above her. She crossed the road, climbed the gentle ascent to the house, and knocked.

Mrs. Rush opened the door, candle in hand, raised high above her head. She peered into Lucetta's face as she gave her the shawl with words of thanks, and exclaimed boisterously, in her surprise: —

"Why, Lucetty, — whatever possessed you to bring that shawl home this time o 'night? It's nigh half past eight! There was n't no sense in it at all!"

"I have so much to do to-morrow, I could n't fetch it then, and I was afraid you might want it Sunday."

"Come right in and sit down and rest yourself. I know you 're tired, and you look *that* pale, and you 're just a-tremblin' from climbin' that hill," urged Mrs. Rush, so volubly there was no chance for Lucetta to interject a refusal. "You do look bad, now I see you," and Mrs. Rush held the flaring candle in the girl's face. "Come in for a minute anyway."

"No, no! I must go; Miss Abbot 's all alone."

"H—u—m—m—! Your pap ain't home, mebby?" she asked with that seemingly lifeless interest that betrays a very vital one, for Mrs. Rush was both shrewd and suspicious, and "knew a heap more 'n the men an' ol' Miz Bowles thought she did," as she had confided to her easy-going spouse. But she was really kind in her shallow way, and pitied the girl, whose confidence she

could never entirely win, a fact which she somewhat resented.

"No, he is not," Lucetta answered. "Thank you for all your kindness, Mrs. Rush, and good-night. I must go now."

"Well, do as you please," said Mrs. Rush shortly, closing the door as Lucetta turned away.

CHAPTER XII

A HEARTH-STONE HEROINE

When Lucetta reached home, she found Miss Abbot in bed in her corner of the little bedroom, sleeping soundly, worn out by the fatigues of a day of thankless drudgery. Zeb had come home again during Lucetta's absence at Mrs. Rush's, and was sitting in silence before the fire: a silence which was not, as formerly, like the peaceful rumination of an ox, but now suggested the dumb misery of that creature under the cruel goad. He twisted his fingers till one might have looked for the bones to snap; his feeble mouth twitched, and the loose lips puckered like a child's making ready to cry. Then he would start up and leave the house, as if its narrow space fretted him like a cell in a prison. He had been in this harassed, nervous state since his wife's death, and Lucetta thought it only a manifestation of his grief. But now his trouble, whatever it was, seemed to have reached a climax. His attitude and the expression of his pale eyes convinced her he was suffering unbearable anguish. Her own anxiety made her less sympathetic than usual. She feared his being up at this hour would prove fatal to the expedition she

had planned. A groan burst from his lips that roused her.

"What is it, pappy? Are you ailin'?"

He shook his head in denial, then buried his face on his folded arms and trembled, until she cried: —

"Why, pappy, you 've got a chill!"

"No, no, girl! Let me be, can't ye?" he said querulously. He could find no relief in expression, and sat the picture of wretchedness. At last Lucetta in despair went to her own little bed, hoping that he would soon seek his. But he sat till the clock struck eleven; then she heard him lie down with inarticulate murmurings and stifled moaning. Almost at once his flaccid nature succumbed to sleep, worn out with the unwonted stress of feeling.

When Lucetta was convinced, by his regular breathing, that his slumbers were sound, she arose, though it was near midnight, to carry out her purpose, which was to walk to Crofton and back before morning, a journey of fourteen miles, in order to warn the sheriff of the deed that menaced the life of an innocent man. She had decided it was best to leave no clue that would involve any one else, should the matter leak out; walking alone was the safest way, and she hoped to return before the household was astir in the morning.

Women are rarely possessed of that form of courage which finds vent in taking up arms in war or in savage fighting. They are not ambitious

of martial glory. Now and then, an heroic spirit adorns the pages of history, possessed of a high design which leads to martyrdom and wins immortality.

But these hearth-stone heroines, — who can number them! They sit unregarded in the ashes, like Cinderella, yet do their duty as unflinchingly as the soldier at the front, without his hope of glorious reward. There was as vast an army of them at home during the terrible years of the Civil War as of men in the field. Their blood did not flow hot as on the fields of victory, nor grow sluggish in defeat, but fled back to the heart in the anguish of utter loss. Or it was drained slowly from overtasked bodies by ministrations in hospitals and on battle-fields after the combat, or wasted away in a round of double duties at home. How hard it was to bear their part was revealed in the blanched cheeks, the ashy lips, the hair whitened before its time, the eyes burning with the fires of anxiety or dulled by floods of unavailing tears, of those who waited and watched beside the hearth-stone. Action, fierce and terrible, is not so deadly as this torturing quiescence.

Many of these women were exalted far above the ties of kinship when it came to a question of duty that might involve the sacrifice of the liberty or even the life of a brother, father, or husband for the good of the nation. This lonely spot in Indiana held a few such spirits, in whom burned the sacred fire of patriotism, — women so humble

that opportunity rarely drew aside the curtain from the shrine and let it shine out in the sight of men. Yet how faithfully they used these occasions, how unfalteringly they decided when one or many must suffer, even if that decision but lay between them and their own conscience!

Without a moment's hesitation at the thought of whom it might implicate, even though it be her own father, Lucetta quietly made her preparations for the long, solitary walk. It were better the designs of the conspirators were frustrated than that murder should be committed, that the assassin, whoever he proved to be, should be held a prisoner in Crofton jail, than that Abner Neal, their neighbor, friend, and benefactor, their stay in poverty and sickness, should be his victim, when Providence had put it into her power alone to prevent it.

She made ready so quietly that Miss Abbot did not stir, and slipped into the sitting-room, raised the wooden latch to the outer door, pushed the latch-string through, so that she could reënter without disturbing them, and took the lane to the road, which was as familiar to her as the ravine path, and which, three miles further on, entered the Crofton turnpike. On either hand lay thick woods broken by a few fields. From them came sounds of night life, which gave her no disquiet; she felt no fear but that her mission might fail through some untoward circumstance. She walked rapidly, for she knew the return could be made more slowly. When she had traveled two thirds of this by-road,

another sound, mingling with that of the night insects, filled her with wild alarm. The wind had risen and a passing shower fell, but neither wind nor rain roused that grisly terror which almost held her feet in their tracks. It was that direful cry that came, faintly but distinctly, from far and near: —

"O—a—k—houn! O—a—k—houn! O—a—k—houn!"

Invisible things seemed closing about her like a pack of wolves. She took refuge in the woods, and, although her feet felt as though they were shod with lead, made such progress that before she reached the turnpike the ominous sounds were left behind. On the highway a new dread seized her, — that of meeting a chance traveler who might seek to detain her or offer her insult. Once, disconcerted by the rattle of wheels, she hid till a farm-wagon passed on. The wind lashed her clothing and twisted it around her body, impeding her steps, and, when it quieted, a drizzling shower set in that saturated her garments, but her purpose never faltered. Her heart lightened when, after hours as it seemed to her, she saw afar the lights that twinkled around the court-house clock, and her steps quickened, for the perilous part of her journey was done.

She soon reached the jail. It was an old-fashioned, two-story brick house, with a spacious hall in the middle and a long ell at the rear, and it stood on a corner at the intersection of two streets.

The part that was exposed on two sides was used as a residence for the sheriff, — who also acted as jailer, — and the other was the prison proper. The building was but two rooms deep, the rear of which was divided into small cells for refractory prisoners; the front one was a general assembly room, where they ate their meals and stayed during the day, and, when they were few, slept at night. All the windows on this side of the house were barred and crisscrossed with rods of iron. The house had a sandstone foundation, and it would have been an easy matter to remove one of those big blocks for the escape of prisoners. The hall door was an ordinary one of oak, but those opening into the prisoners' cells were of iron. As a prison, the building was far from secure in the best of times, and, now that it held as inmates Jeff Riddle, the deserter, and the men who had interfered with the polling in Riffle Township, awaiting orders from Indianapolis, it was guarded day and night. That very morning, Jeff's affectionate grand-aunt, Mrs. Bowles, had paid him a visit. She had looked at him through the bars, and he, expecting sympathy, wore a befitting expression of countenance, when she burst out fiercely: —

"Jeff Riddle, you 're the first of the name that ever looked through the bars. And hangin' 's too good for you for 'listin' at all. You always was a born fool! And you 're a disgrace to your blood and raisin'."

Jeff, crestfallen, had turned away from the grat-

ing, while the woman stalked off without another word to anybody, to the great amusement of the good-natured sheriff.

Lucetta rapped softly at the hall door, and at once heard a window raised gently, and a voice asking softly: —

"Is that you, Billy? Are the boys coming? We 're ready for 'em."

It was too dark to see the face of the speaker, who grew angry and swore under his breath when she made no reply.

"You don't mean to say the white-livered hounds have failed us?"

The girl suspected that some enterprise of a serious nature was on foot, and knocked again loudly. A voice within asked: —

"Who 's there?"

"A friend," she answered.

"Damn it, can't you tell your name?" said the person impatiently.

"No; please don't ask it."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

The man opened the door a narrow space, and, seeing a dim outline, reached forth a brawny hand, drew her inside before she realized it, and quickly shut and made all fast again. He then opened the slide of the dark lantern, and threw a flood of light on his prisoner.

"By heaven, it 's a girl!" he exclaimed. Instantly a dozen men closed about them. Surprise

and anxiety were depicted on their faces, but neither unkindness nor hostility.

Now the suspense was relieved, Lucetta sank on the lower steps of the stairway, and faltered out to the man who had just released her: —

"You are Sheriff Hale?"

"Yes."

"I have come to warn you that Saturday night is set for a plot against Abner Neal. I think they 're going to kill him."

"How do you know this, girl?"

"I overheard Jim Swazey, Alec Rush's hand, talking to some one about it in the blacksmith's shop at dusk this evening, on my way to take home Mrs. Rush's shawl," she explained, with that minute attention to trifling detail common in rural folk; and then she told what she had heard, as nearly as she could remember it.

A man in the group whispered to the sheriff: —

"It 's Lucetta Whittaker."

"Zeb's girl?" asked the sheriff, in the same low tone.

"Yes."

"You did n't hear the name of the man who was going to do it?" asked the sheriff, turning to Lucetta.

"No, they mentioned no names."

"Well, little girl, you 've done your duty," said the sheriff kindly. "Now you need rest and must go to bed. You 're not afraid to stay all night in the jail, I reckon? — a girl like you," seeing a troubled look on the girl's face.

"No, I must go home," she said firmly. "No one must know I came."

"She 's right, Sheriff," said one of the men.

"She might rest an hour."

There was the snapping of a watch-lid, and a finer, smaller hand than that of the sheriff held a gold watch in the glare of the bull's-eye.

"Can't be done," said the man who held it. "It 's time now; five minutes of two."

There was a subdued shuffling of feet and the ringing sound of metal. The sheriff said excitedly: —

"By heaven, we 've not three minutes to get her off. Where 's Jerry? He might take her home on horseback."

Jerry was "riding bailiff," and when they looked around for him he could not be found.

"He 's off to warn 'em," cried one voice.

"He was here when the girl came in," said another.

The men looked at each other astounded, for Jerry had been a participant in their plans; and on the dismayed silence that followed, a metallic sound broke dully twice.

"By heaven, they 're at it! To your places, boys!" was the low command of the sheriff. "We 'll not parley with them except with lead."

Each man was instantly at his post beside the windows, that were shielded by heavy wooden shutters, which they opened a span. In the excitement, the girl was forgotten. She climbed to the

upper landing on the stairway and sat down, with a vague idea of being out of the way. The next moment a volley rang from the revolvers of the men within, and was instantly returned from without. Not a sound came from those on the defense but the click of revolvers. From without came a rush of feet; that was a signal for a second volley from the jail. One loud cry followed, which Lucetta knew was a cry of pain, then all was silence again.

The girl sat undismayed. At first she had experienced that horror of blood-shedding a woman always feels, but excitement dispelled it. And when shot after shot rang out, she felt so urgent a desire to join the fray she could hardly remain seated. The spirit of a pioneer grand-dame who had shot at Indians through the crevices of her cabin stirred within her, as it does on occasion in every American woman who has sprung from such ancestry.

The fight was over as suddenly as it had begun. The sheriff opened the hall door to reconnoitre cautiously, when he was hailed from without.

"All right here! The enemy has retreated in quick order!" and a laugh followed.

"Is that you, Gore?" demanded the sheriff.

"Yes. Fetch a light, and let 's look after the wounded. Somebody was hurt."

A kerosene lamp in the hall was hastily sought by some one, while the others went out of doors with the sheriff, and soon Lucetta saw them bring

in the limp body of a man, which they carried into Hale's part of the house. A squad of armed men of the Home Guard followed. She peered over the banister at the men below and asked: —

"Is he dead?"

The sheriff, lamp in hand, was going in search of water and bandages, when the voice from above startled him into nearly dropping it.

"Good Lord, girl, I 'd clean forgot you! No, he is n't much hurt, — fainted from loss of blood."

Lucetta descended the steps firmly, and, when he raised the light above his head to look at her, he said: —

"Well, you are a plucky one! Not a bit scared in a battle. In the dark all by yourself, too! I 'm awful sorry," he added regretfully.

"Now I 'll go. I must start right away, or I can't reach home in time," was the only response she made.

Sheriff Hale was as large of heart as he was of stature, and as gentle as he was brave; moreover, he had five little girls of his own that he had lifted, sleeping, from their beds and carried to the neighbors, out of harm's way, early in the evening; he had also sent away his wife when certain that a raid on the jail would be made that night; and he was painfully reluctant to let Lucetta go home alone.

"I wish you would go upstairs to bed. The danger 's over for to-night. The delivery was a failure. But I won't keep you if you think it wiser to go."

One of the men, who had been listening, stepped forward and said: —

"I 'll go with her, Hale, as far as the dirt road. There won't be any danger after she leaves the pike. The Knights don't know me here."

"He 's all right," said Hale to Lucetta. "Go with him, for I can't think of letting you go alone. The town 's roused."

She consented, and the hall door was opened to let them pass out. A great crowd had gathered in the street, and people were running toward it from every direction. In the press, they left the town unnoticed.

Lucetta and her companion walked the entire distance to the point agreed on without exchanging a dozen words, and as he left her there he said: —

"I know you, Lucetta Whittaker, and some time my life may be in peril; I may need a woman's help. If it should be so, I now know where to find one in whose bravery and loyalty I can trust."

"I do not know you, sir, but I will help you if ever I can," and they parted at the road that led her homeward.

As Lucetta proceeded rapidly on her way, she seemed the only being alive, another Eve in another Eden, alone. By this time, night was going, and an owl was making a fretful plaint at its brevity. An early morning breeze sprang up, cool and damp, from the woods on Honey Creek, bringing with it an odor befitting the air of Paradise, so

heavenly sweet, for the wild grapes flung abroad their morning incense to the rising sun. A pheasant drummed a reveille from its post on the hillside; a bittern boomed among the sedges and awoke mournful echoes; the cocks sent trumpetings from farmstead to farmstead, announcing the dawning, like heralds before a royal procession. These sounds were all significant to Lucetta, and she scanned the eastern sky, which was as familiar a map to her as the printed ones in the geography.

She knew by the argent shimmer on the mass of low, thin clouds on the horizon, that the hour was near, the most beautiful and least familiar of the day, the hour of dawn, which is as lingering in its coming as twilight of evening in its going, but in which there is an awesomeness which the falling of night does not inspire. She watched the swift scattering of clouds as they fled before the morning wind, like a crowd before the advance guard of a monarch, and saw the horizon stained by a tremulous pink. At this moment, as if watching for a signal, a lark rose from the meadow before the cabin, which she had now reached, and sang with glorious energy the few rare notes of its thrilling song. It seemed the prelude of the morning choir, for, as if in response, a redbird trilled from a thicket in the creek bottom, a catbird mewed in the grapevines, and a robin warbled a homely ditty from the garden fence, while a malicious jay screamed from the swaying bough of an apple-tree in the dooryard.

All these things — the ecstasy of Nature at the return of day — Lucetta noted with delight, and when she reached the cabin the sun came up with a burst as she pulled the latch-string of the silent house.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BARN-BURNING

After a hard day's ploughing, Abner Neal and his hands were glad enough to go to bed at nightfall, and nine o'clock saw the entire household asleep. There was one duty he never neglected before he slept, no matter how great his fatigue: he saw that his double-barreled shotgun was loaded and capped ready for instant use. No loyal man of either party was without arms in that troubled time, when insurrection was at the very door.

There is nothing like twelve hours' work in the open air to induce sound slumber. It is Nature's daily renewal of man's powers, to mark her higher esteem of him, which she grants but yearly to her lower plant-life. How generously she rewards his puniest efforts in return for dressing her broad bosom with the varied greenery of wheat and oats, barley and rye, corn and clover, whose exquisite color-tones in growth delight his eye, and in the harvest fill his granaries! The soft dews of morning are for the refreshing, the rain for revivifying, the sunshine for ripening all these common things, that the fruits of his toil may benefit him. Even the wonderful prodigality of vegetation and over-

abundance of seed are for his welfare, that he may never come to want through his own amazing wastefulness and passion for destroying. He, of all Nature's creatures, is the only one capable of perfect gratitude, yet is most ungrateful. His murmurings began with the primal sacrifice of the firstfruits of the field and the firstlings of the flock.

Abner Neal was, on the whole, one of the best men of his class. He took his blessings with becoming thankfulness, and patiently accepted his calamities. A strain of Irish blood helped him to throw off trouble, and rally quickly from defeat.

The blessings of rest had fallen on his house, and their slumbers were as profound as those of the fabled Seven Sleepers. The rising wind did not disturb them; nor did the sound of wheels rouse them, although it ceased within their own barnyard, scarcely a hundred yards from the house.

An oilcloth-covered conveyance, known as a "spring-wagon," was driven as cautiously as might be under the open shed where vehicles were kept. The driver quickly unloosed the traces, but, without removing the harness from the horses, tied them in a corner. Nine men had alighted from the wagon, not without some clatter, for each was well armed. In silence they dispersed into the gloom of the barn and were lost in its shadows. It was so warily done, not even the house-dog was aroused.

When all were safely stowed, one man asked another nearest him: —

"Don't you think we 'd better wake Abner?"

"No; Frank said not to, as the old man can't do much, and it would scare the women. We may be able to manage this quietly."

"Frank ought to be here soon, anyway," said the other.

There was the scratch of a match and a sputter, and the man held the light to the face of a watch hidden in his hat crown, that no stray beam might betray them.

"It 's half past eleven," he announced. "Frank said he 'd be here by that time."

He paused, and a voice answered quietly: —

"And he is."

"Good! Which direction do you expect the attack?"

"From the southwest; that 's the nearest way for them to come. We have the advantage of them, and are ready for them, thanks to our friends here." And he laid his hand on the shoulder of the taller and slighter of the two men.

"To me? not much! Why, don't you know" —

"Too loud, boys," cautioned the big man, who seemed to be in authority. They were quiet for half an hour, when Frank could contain himself no longer.

"They 've got scent of us, I 'm afraid. Harv 's got spies every place, even in the jail. Eh, Hale?"

As he spoke the last words, a rail fell out of place

from the fence back of the barn, as indicated by the sound, some yards away. A quickly smothered curse followed the noise, and Frank, who was peeping through a crack into the darkness, could dimly see a figure skulking toward the sodden straw-stacks which stood farther down the yard. The men within the shed watched for others to follow, but no one came.

"They seem to have weakened," whispered Frank. "There 's only one of 'em."

"Hush! the rest may be hidden in the fence corners on the field-side."

As they watched, a crash as of breaking glass followed, and a flame instantly shot up the side of the stack, that soon made it a veritable pillar of fire. A shrill voice screamed: —

"To hell with old Abe Lincoln and all the Lincoln dogs!" and the creature gamboled grotesquely about the roaring stack. He flung up his arms in wild gestures, uttered fearful imprecations as a second one became enkindled, then broke into shrieks of hysteric laughter that ended abruptly in awful silence.

"It 's brighter than Arcturus! Fire can burn out blood-stains! The blood of my friend! the blood of my friend! The lot! the lot! It fell my lot!" he chanted weirdly, then screamed in ecstasy and capered more wildly as the fire mounted higher. The fit passed, and his voice fell into its accustomed mildness, and he said with rational decision: —

"It 's like hell-fire!"

Then, with sudden fury, he cried: —

"Let 'em burn, burn, burn to everlastin', and I 'll burn with 'em!"

With a leap he plunged into the raging flames. Then, with a fearful shriek, a woman flung herself over the fence and ran to the maniac's rescue, and she, too, would have been swallowed in this fiery furnace, had not Frank rushed down on her and held her back.

"Oh, it 's pappy! it 's pappy!" she screamed distractedly, and fell at Frank's feet, where she groveled as in a fit.

The men in the barn stood awestruck, bereft of all their senses but that of sight, with jaws dropped and arms rigid, useless, and heavy as leaden images, as if under the bewitchment of Zeb's incantations, till the cry of the girl broke the spell; when they ran to the stacks, too late to save the man from his desperate deed.

As they burst into the glare of the fire, there was a rustle in the fence corners, and half a dozen men fled across the wheat-field and were lost in the woods beyond, but some of the sheriff's men were collected enough to send a volley crashing after them.

They dragged the man from the flames, scorched and suffocated, but still breathing feebly, and all interest was centred on the frenzied wretch writhing in the throes of self-inflicted torture, who gasped agonizingly for the breath his seared lungs refused to take.

By this time the household was aroused and in commotion. Abner Neal and his men hurried out half clothed, followed by the women. They were all cool and collected, for they had lived for months under the menace of arson and murder, and were therefore not unprepared for this crisis, which was in a measure a relief from wearing suspense.

When Abner Neal saw that it was Zeb lying there on the ground, contempt drove pity from his heart.

"That fellow!" he cried. "I've almost given him the bread he's eaten for years for the sake of his women folks. God knows he never earned it. And I've kept the roof over his head."

"Oh, it's all true, it's all true, but I did what I could. Frank knows!" moaned Lucetta.

Sheriff Hale went up to the angry, outraged old man, and spoke to him in a low voice, but Abner was not to be appeased.

"The fellow's done for. His punishment's greater than any the law could give him, God knows. For decency's and humanity's sake, let us take him into the house," urged the kind sheriff.

"Take the viper into my house! A fellow that would murder me in my bed! No, take him to jail!"

"At least, get us something to soothe his pain, some flour, and oil, and bandages," pleaded the sheriff. But the old man still refused.

Frank said, "Don't be so hard, father; you forget," sinking his voice lower. "Lucetta can hear you. Mother, you at least will be kinder."

But Mrs. Neal had neither kindly words nor looks of pity for Zeb's daughter, although humanity prompted her to fetch such simple palliatives as they had at hand.

Sheriff Hale went to Lucetta, who still sat on the ground, wretched beyond the power of words or motion, with her face buried in her hands.

Even the harsh duties of his office could not change the benignant clemency of his nature, — a gentle quality frequently the gift of men of large physique and calm, even temperament, who are too slow to stab with sarcastic wit, and too strong willfully to pain the weak. Fate selects them for enterprises where endurance and patience are needed, and for troubled womankind to trust.

He raised the girl to her feet, supported her in his arms, and soothed her with kind words. He was the only person there who entered into her feelings, and sympathized fully with her misery and friendlessness; he alone realized that her mental torture was greater than Zeb's physical agony, and he wished to spare her the added pain of the hard words which fell from the lips of those about them.

He motioned to Frank, who came to his side.

"Take the girl away, Frank, into the house," he said. "It 's all too much for her."

Frank beckoned to his aid a slender young man, and between them they supported her to the house, tearless and despairing, and so exhausted she could hardly walk.

Mrs. Neal returned with her stores, and the men

stripped Zeb of his smoking tatters, and applied oil and flour, and wrapped him in a sheet. They took a door from its hinges, and on this improvised stretcher they carried the pain-stricken wretch to the house of the man whom he had been appointed to murder.

Frank had laid Lucetta down on a lounge in the sitting-room. He could not comfort her, for she seemed beyond the reach of words, and he unable to call up any.

"Oh, will they hang poor pappy?" she asked distractedly over and over. "He didn't plot it of his own will. He couldn't do it. It was the lot; he said it was the lot."

She clung to Frank's hand in the intensity of her despair, and implored him with pain-widened eyes for comfort. Then, when she realized that it was his father whom hers would have murdered, she shrank back into the pillow, and moaned in bitterness of soul: —

"Oh, he would have killed your father! Let me go away out of this house. What right have I here?"

She attempted to rise, but he gently detained her.

"Try to be quiet, Lucetta, so you can tell me all about it. We must know, so the others may be brought to justice. It is your duty to your father." His appeal was not guileless. He knew of her exaggerated idea of duty. "He was the tool of the Knights, wasn't he?"

"I think so, but I don't know. He has been so

strange lately, but I thought it was on account of mammy. To-day he acted so worried, and, as night came, seemed like a crazy man. Knowing what I did, I was afraid; and when he left the house so late, after he thought we were asleep, I got up and followed him. Oh, I was afraid, but God knows I didn't expect this! Oh, please take me home now, and I'll tell you all I know to-morrow."

As she spoke, the bearers brought Zeb in, and when she saw him wrapped in a sheet she rose to a sitting position, and asked quietly: —

"Is he dead?"

Sheriff Hale stepped to her side and said: —

"No, my child, but there's no hope for him. He'll die before morning."

A look of relief crossed her face, which was followed by a fit of terrible weeping.

"Don't take on so, child," said the tender-hearted sheriff. "It's a God's mercy he'll be taken, for he was clean crazy."

But he realized it was the other and far more terrible punishment that the girl had dreaded.

They laid the body on the lounge from which Lucetta had risen, and after a time Zeb's moaning ceased, lulled by the homely applications they had made. Some one came in from the village and said the doctor was out. Zeb lay apparently lifeless, but when he heard the doctor's name he roused, as if some distracted chord of his memory had been struck; and he looked at Lucetta, who was kneeling at his side, and said falteringly: —

"I did n't want to do it."

"Why did you, then?" asked the sheriff.

"Arcturus is my star, and it led me on."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, Harv said so. I don't know. I did n't throw the fire; it fell from Arcturus. It 's like hell-fire. Oh, it burns! it burns!"

"He 's as crazy as a loon," whispered the sheriff to the tall, slender man by his side. "What 's to be done with him?"

"Nothing. Look!"

The sheriff turned toward Zeb, and saw a change pass over his face, like a film over the cold surface of a mirror, and he beckoned his men from the room.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RIVALS

THE barns and bridges and every available space within a radius of five miles around Ridgely were blazing with gorgeous red, white, and blue posters announcing the Fourth of July barbecue. It fell on Saturday, which, from time immemorial, has been a sort of holiday among country folk, an auspicious coincidence which promised "a big time." The barbecue was to be held in Bolser's woods, a mile from the village, and all the young people turned out, without regard to political bias. The draft, for some unknown reason, had not occurred at the expected time, but was in abeyance, and caused disquiet that broke into seditious mutterings and threats of violence. Many of the wiser, older people of both parties resolved to stay away from this gathering, which, on former occasions, had been merely a social affair, for now it was prophesied that a disturbance of some sort would occur. Of late, secret meetings had been held with greater frequency, and they feared the agitators would use the opportunity to further their own ends; for their influence was becoming felt, and had spread like contagion over the country, until nearly every township had its branch Temple.

The War Democrats and Republicans had hitherto considered these meetings as of little consequence. The tragedy at Neal's had been a fearful shock, and had opened their eyes to the mischievous if not downright criminal intentions of the Copperheads. It seemed the policy of the governor, who kept thoroughly informed of their movements, to ignore much of their incipient lawlessness, and to deal as leniently with the actual transgressors as possible; and in the end it proved a wise course.

By reason of this judicious policy, the men who had assaulted Frank, after having been turned over to the proper legal authorities, were released on bail; and Jeff Riddle, who had been sentenced to death, had been pardoned by the President through the influence of his loyal kinsmen, and had returned to the army a wiser man. No effort had been made, apparently, to find Zeb's accomplices, if he had any; many thought his deed the work of an overwrought brain, crazed by grief and excitement.

Frank, for some mysterious reason, had not rejoined his regiment, although his health was fully recovered. He came and went on seemingly purposeless errands, which caused not a little comment and sagacious inferences on the part of the "Butternuts." He still wore his uniform, which he knew became him well, and he was aware that the girls liked him all the better for wearing it. He had acquired the soldier swagger, and his cap had a rakish habit of getting on one side of his head,

which was covered with thick, crisp, light brown hair. His dark-blue eyes, rather bold in expression, straight muscular figure, made him an ideal man-of-arms, and the maidens thereabouts were quick to appreciate him, for their woman's admiration for a soldier was stronger than their political bias. Therefore, when the news went abroad in the neighborhood that Frank had bought a new single buggy, it set them anxiously speculating as to what girl he would honor with an invitation to occupy the vacant seat beside him, and go with him to the barbecue. Frank had never "kept company" especially with any one, but had bestowed his attentions impartially on all, perfectly aware how much they were valued. What wonder, then, that he took his own time to make his selection, and waited till the day before the great event to do so; unlike the other young fellows, who thought it was necessary to "engage their company" at least a fortnight before. He knew any girl of them would throw her accepted swain over for the pleasure of going with him. It is not surprising that he grew conceited and somewhat cavalier in his treatment of them, and indulged in a good deal of figurative handkerchief-dropping. His four years in college had modified his opinions of girls somewhat, and these country belles were no longer quite to his taste.

Frank's complacency was destined to receive a shock. He had made his choice undisturbed by a doubt of possible refusal, and it had fallen on

Lucetta Whittaker. Why he was moved to ask her he could not tell, — pity perhaps. Ever since Zeb's death, now three weeks past, he had heard nothing at home but bitter censure of the Whittakers. He had not spoken of his decision to his father or mother, who he knew had no intention of going, and it rather tickled his sense of importance when he thought of the storm it would raise if they found it out. All that remained now for him to do was to invite Lucetta, and, with this laudable object in view, on Friday evening he hitched his spirited chestnut mare to his new buggy and set out for the Whittaker cabin.

Since her father's death, Lucetta had remained in her humble dwelling with the schoolmistress, for she had nowhere else to go. Moreover, most of the neighbors were too poor, especially in those hard times, to receive her in their homes, even if she would have consented to live with them. She managed to subsist off the garden and the money Miss Abbot paid her, and she earned a little by sewing for the neighbors and helping at harvest dinners. But she was not strong enough to labor at actual field-work with the energy required, and as many women were compelled to do, owing to the scarcity of men from enlistment.

To the conventional-minded, attending a place of amusement so soon after a double bereavement seems indecent, but here formal usages were not regarded. We are largely governed by custom, even in the matter of our most sacred griefs. In

this locality, at the visitation of death no change took place in the habits of life; the outward badge of mourning was rarely worn; but possibly the grief was as sincere and the sense of loss as great as if all the niceties of polite society had been observed.

For these reasons, therefore, it would not have been indecorous had Lucetta chosen to go to the barbecue, but her recluse habit made her reluctant to mingle with large crowds. She feared that this meeting would end violently. The community had now reached a climax of feeling, in regard to the conduct of the war, the draft, and the recent outrages of the Knights, so strong that distinct lines had been drawn between the party then universally called Butternuts on the one side, and Republicans and War Democrats on the other; and friendly affiliation, even on such an occasion, had become all but impossible.

Frank drove through the lane and drew up before the door with a flourish. The two dogs, Bose and Dandy, added to the glory of his arrival with joyous yelps, as if announcing a hero. Having tied his horse to the fence, he walked to the open door and called out a good-day to Lucetta, who sat sewing just within. Stooping instinctively, he entered the room, to find, to his disgust, Jim Swazey sitting near the window, silently seesawing on the hind legs of his chair, sullen and chagrined. Instantly the two men assumed a different air, ruffling like cocks making ready for the onset. Jim's handsome,

swarthy face mustered a bullying frown; Frank's blue eyes flashed the contempt he felt, and a curt nod passed between them. Each was conscious they were rivals for the same favor.

Lucetta at once perceived the bitter animosity of the two men by their bearing toward each other, and mentally prepared herself for a skirmish of passionate words, while casting about for a placating topic of conversation. Unluckily, her first words were a firebrand: —

"Frank, you 've been away so long maybe you don't know my friend, Mr. Swazey?"

Frank glared at him, and said with cutting contempt: —

"If he 's one of your friends, you may mark me off the list! I don't count Copperheads among mine, nor any one that does!"

Swazey rose to his feet, hate blazing from his eyes, his lips rolled back in a grin of ferocious savagery from his clenched teeth, and presented a most inhuman spectacle. Murder would have been, at that moment, a pleasure to him, inflicting pain a delight; his hands contracted to fists, and involuntarily he took a fighting attitude.

"By heaven! I 'm not so scarce of friends that I would have one of Lincoln's dogs for one!" and he threw out his sinewy right arm to strike a blow.

Frank nimbly sprang aside and laughed tauntingly: —

"I guess this is not quite the place for us to

settle our differences. I think you 'd better join Early or Morgan in Kentucky, and I 'll try to meet you there. It would give me pleasure to blow your brains out."

Lucetta caught Frank's arm and said entreatingly, though not so softly in her agitation but that Swazey heard : —

"Don't quarrel with him; he 's a bigger man than you; you don't know how strong and cruel he is!"

In her anxiety she quite forgot the other man, who dropped his arm at this speech, betraying her entire indifference to him and her anxiety for Frank. Swazey laughed sneeringly, and his aspect was even more brutal than before.

"I 'll not hurt your fine sweetheart now! But I 'll fix him yet! I did n't know I was making up to another man's girl! That 's why you would n't go with me!" he said coarsely, and left the house, muttering vindictively.

"What did he mean?" cried Lucetta in agitation.

"Nothing so very far from the truth, Lucetta."

"No, no! Not that; I meant his threat. Oh, Frank, be careful! You don't know what 's on foot in this neighborhood. It 's too dreadful to talk about. Even worse things may follow than those that have been done. They don't dream how much I know, and it 's as much as my life 's worth to tell. You are a marked man. All Union men are; so be careful, for you are reckless, Frank, and sometimes provoke people needlessly."

"The impudence of that fellow pushing himself in here! Maybe I know more than you think. I'll be all right! Don't you fret! They are skulking cowards that work at night like jackals. I'm ready for 'em. — But I came for something else, Lucetta. I want you to go with me to the barbecue at Bolser's woods to-morrow in my new rig."

"Oh, Frank, I can't go, for I'd just told Mr. Swazey I could n't before you came. I have n't the heart for such things."

"Oh, a little fun will do you good. Of course you'd not want to go with him. No respectable girl would want to be seen with that scoundrel. I never could see why girls run after every strange fellow that comes into the neighborhood. That refusal don't count. You'll go with me, won't you?" he said persuasively.

Until Frank saw Swazey sitting there, discomfited, he had given little thought to the possible chance of refusal; but as soon as another man coveted what he wanted, he felt for the moment that Lucetta's company to the picnic was his most ardent wish. Her refusal only made him the more determined to win her consent.

Before he joined the army he had been a favorite with the girls, and was accustomed to having his favors received with alacrity and becoming gratitude. Lucetta's repeated refusal seemed like a rebuff, yet he hardly believed her in earnest, as she was only a girl after all, and he a sort of con-

quering hero. He was chagrined, and felt at her persistent denial the same humiliation he had experienced when defeated in a petty skirmish with the enemy; and then, too, he resented being treated like Swazey.

Lucetta, who had spent all her life reading the riddles of other people's moods, unraveled his with ease.

"No, Frank, I cannot go! It is for your own good that I stay at home."

He grew angry at being resisted by a girl, and flung at her cruel words as he quickly left the house: —

"Since you know so much about them, perhaps you prefer the company of a Knight of the Golden Circle to one of 'Lincoln's dogs'!"

Lucetta made no answer to this unjust taunt, but watched him drive down the lane, hurt by his suspicion, and fearful for him if he went to the barbecue in his present mood. His plain-speaking did not wound her, for the people in the community were primitive in their habits and open of speech. The polish of polite society had not smoothed bitter truth into bland evasion, nor secret irritation into suave acquiescence, nor turned lively curiosity into well-bred interest; there was little glossing of rough speech under the varnish of gentle manners, and the thin-skinned interloper was apt to suffer. Between them, wisely, it was give and take, and there were few quarrels and no feuds under such conditions. But there was no small amount of good

feeling, real kindliness, and rude integrity in their intercourse with each other, before this secret treason began to permeate the State, and set friend against friend, and neighbor against neighbor. Their worst passions had been roused by the war, and nearly to a man they sympathized with secession, and caught up and bruited about the treasonable speeches of their leaders. The women violently echoed the men, who were their masters; and now and then one was thought worthy to be taken into their councils, such as Mrs. Bowles.

Lucetta was neither shocked nor surprised at Frank's rudeness, nor did she feel resentment at his savagery. It was not unusual for "men-folks" to talk so, but he had grieved her by his last fling as no sharp speech had done before. The ugly scene between the two men left an uneasy feeling behind, and she had forebodings of evil so strong she could not dismiss them. Her fears were so clamorous that before Frank drove rapidly out of sight she resolved, with some wild idea of warding off a crisis by her presence, to go to the barbecue herself if Miss Abbot would accompany her.

CHAPTER XV

THE BARBECUE

The morning of the barbecue dawned clear and bright, with the delicious freshness and slight chilliness of the atmosphere which comes after thunderstorms. The rain had not been violent enough to make the roads muddy, and the dust was well laid. People, not deterred by damp ground and consequent discomfort, were seen coming from every direction, in all sorts of vehicles and on foot, — thrifty men, and even women, carrying their best shoes in their hands till in sight of the objective point, Bolser's woods.

As each wagon delivered its load in the grounds, there were hearty greetings and vigorous handshakings; every one seemed in fine humor. The assemblage was plainly, even poorly, dressed, for calico was forty and fifty cents a yard, and finer materials proportionately dear. The men wore trousers and coats of blue and brown jeans, and their shirts were of homespun linen. The women's dresses were of linsey, woven in such checks and stripes as their fancy suggested and their skill could execute; and some were clad in clean but faded cotton dresses they had bought long before

the war began. The old dames wore drawn silk bonnets with long skirts, and the girls and younger women calico sunbonnets. The young seemed lively and cheerful, as if no war-cloud hung over them, or their gay spirits may have been but the exhilaration of the moment, called forth by the occasion, — a rare break in their dull lives. The elder people had a look of settled melancholy.

The girls giggled and prattled together in groups, now and then casting inviting glances on the loutish young fellows that hovered afar, but were keen enough to follow at a safe distance as the group moved from place to place.

The older men, after the first hearty greeting, were taciturn and apathetic, or anxiously alert, some even gruffly irritable; others were collected in knots talking earnestly, remote from the women and younger people.

The speakers' stand was erected under a group of magnificent beech-trees, whose long, interlacing limbs, with their perfectness of foliage, made a wide-spreading canopy of greenery, through which the sun scarcely penetrated. Rude benches, constructed of boards laid upon pegs driven in the ground, furnished seats for two or three hundred people.

On one side of the grove, where the trees had been thinned, a trench had been dug, and early in the morning a great fire of logs started, so that it might burn low enough for roasting the beef, and two sheep to be hung over it later. Now all was

in readiness, and the carcases were suspended by hickory poles, supported on heavy forked sticks planted on opposite sides of the trench. The logs were reduced to a mass of glowing coals, and the savory odors from the meat soon attracted a large crowd around the trench, many of whom had not tasted fresh meat in months. They watched the fat as it dripped into the fire, their eyes watering from smoke, and jumped back with shrill screams as it burst into a fierce little blaze.

Genuine coffee was ready to be put into pots at the right moment, and brown cane-sugar was provided to sweeten it. These last were almost unattainable luxuries, for which parched barley and wheat and home-made maple-sugar had long been substituted. Many of these people, for months together, had not a cent's worth of actual scrip in their possession; all their transactions were done by exchange, — their farms furnishing them a bare subsistence at best.

Alec Rush and Hiram Gillum were officiating as cooks. When a great cloud of ill-smelling smoke puffed into the girls' faces, tears flowed copiously, and they fell back en masse against the boys "lined up" behind them. The young fellows uttered mock groans, and stretched forth rescuing arms, which the girls evaded with loud laughter and a rush forward.

"Never mind, girls," said one swain, who had overcome his bashfulness enough to speak, "they say beauty draws smoke."

At this sally, a black-eyed maid observed pertly, "How purty you must be, Zeke Creeters!"

There arose at this archaic witticism a combined shout of shrill giggling and coarse guffaws, which acted like a charm in dissolving the invisible barriers that had separated these boys and girls, for instantly they paired off like birds on St. Valentine's Day, and wandered hand in hand about the ground.

Lucetta Whittaker had been standing on the outskirts of this crowd with the schoolmistress. Swasey's bold, fierce eyes had found her out while he was on his rounds as marshal of the day. He did not observe Miss Abbot, and concluded that Lucetta had come thither in the new buggy with Frank, whom, however, he had failed to discover anywhere about the grounds. Resentful and vindictive by nature, he resolved not to let the day pass without redress of some sort, petty or great, as luck sent, for this slight upon him, conveyed by her acceptance of Frank's escort.

While the men were turning the beef on the impromptu spit, Harv Wilson — who was grand marshal, and who wore a scarf of red, white, and blue muslin across his breast — came up, full of importance.

"Most ready, boys?" he asked.

Alec prodded the beef with a sharp-pointed iron rod he had had the foresight to provide, and, as the bright-red juice poured from the puncture, he said complainingly: —

"Seems like it won't never git done. It 'll take an hour yet anyway."

"It 's been a-hangin' on here since seven o'clock, too," said Hi Gillum, wiping his smarting eyes on his shirt-sleeve.

"We must do something with these people. The Crofton brass band did n't come; the Arcady Glee Club 's here, but they don't seem to satisfy 'em like a brass band. They 're gittin' tired of waitin', and I 'm afraid it 'll have a bad effect on the meetin'. It 's eleven o'clock now," said Harv, impatiently, looking up at the sun.

"Have a speech," said Alec, pacifically; "that 'll fetch 'em. Plenty of time for a rouser 'fore this critter 's fitten to eat."

"Good idee," said Harv, approvingly.

Shortly afterward his hard, raucous voice was heard calling the people together. The feeble, elderly men occupied three or four rows immediately under the stand, and the others were sparsely filled with women, whose lawful partners were grouped together on the outskirts, smoking, chewing, and spitting, and passing a bottle from hand to hand. Whiskey was very dear, and consequently was a great treat, and always in evidence on such occasions.

A glee club of young men with nasal, discordant voices sang a campaign song about "Little Mac," — who was seriously talked of as a presidential candidate of promise, — and it was received with great applause.

That Harv read aright the temper of his audience, irritable from hunger and impatient from delay, and cunningly used his knowledge to his own advantage, was proved by the speaker he had selected.

The orator came forward to the edge of the platform, and his tall figure, crowned by a massive head covered with tawny hair, that hung long and thick about it like a lion's mane, his smooth-shaven chin, brilliant, crafty eyes that could suffuse with tears at his will, lips that curled with bitter sarcasm or melted into a smile as gentle as a child's, made him a man of remarkable and impressive presence. There was that in his bearing which stamped him a leader of men, demagogue though he was.

He began his speech with moderation and a happy allusion to the day, and gradually reached the themes that set men on fire, — the conscription act, the removal of McClellan, the enrollment of negro troops, arrest under habeas corpus, the impending draft. His voice, at first of fluting melody, gradually increased to a strident scream as he shrieked to some invisible opponent: —

" Dare no more to lay your hands on the white man's liberty! As the Lord God reigns in heaven, you cannot go on with your system of provost marshals and police officials, arresting free white men for what they conceive their duty! Blood will flow! You cannot, you shall not, forge fetters on our limbs with a struggle for the mastery! The blood of a race of freemen is up; it will not submit to this assault! You may conscript citi-

zens from their homes into the army, but it is true that the popular heart is no longer for the prosecution of this war. Do you think you can compel it so by force? — by Lincoln's dogs with collars round their necks?"

His auditors were tremendously aroused, and as he sat down they called, "Go on! go on!"

Harv seized the opportunity, while the tide of feeling was at the flood, and drew forward a man whom he introduced as Mr. Dodd. He was the Grand Commander of the Knights of the Golden Circle, though it was not generally known to his audience.

He began where the former speaker left off, and fell at once into personal abuse of the head of the party then in power. On the instant, he turned the crowd into a raging mob. He had a thin, passionate voice that rose and fell in cadenced measure, and it swayed them like a strong wind blown across a field of headed wheat. His thin cheeks burned with two red spots, and his pale-blue eyes were bloodshot with the energy of fanatic passion.

"This government of Abe Lincoln's is a failure! He is a usurper! a tyrant! To-day a dollar in gold is worth one dollar and forty-nine cents in their accursed greenbacks, earned by toil of the farmer that calls forth bloody sweat! This war is butchery! It is no longer a white man's government! They want to give your daughters nigger husbands!"

His voice rose to a shriek of rage, and the effect

was like a spark of gunpowder. Men surged forward close up to the stand, wild with passion, and yelled : —

" Down with the nigger-lovers ! "

" To hell with them ! "

" Death and damnation to old Abe ! "

" I ask you, in the name of God," he shouted above the uproar, " will you submit to this, or will you arm yourselves for battle, rise and defy them in your own State ? "

" Treason ! " rang out clear and strong as a bugle.

The crowd turned as one man in the direction of the voice. They beheld Frank Neal, dressed in the uniform they were execrating, his arm extended, pointing an accusing finger at the traitor. He was a fine picture of courage, at the moment lost to all sense of policy or danger. On the ground by his side was a tall, strong man, a stranger to the people, who attempted to drag him from his perilous position, as he stood, a conspicuous figure, on the trunk of a fallen tree.

The speaker cast on him a glance of devilish malice and proceeded vehemently : —

" Our cherished Vallandigham is an exile ; our Senator is wrongfully expelled from his seat ; this war is bloody butchery of our brothers ! Help is at hand ; even now the hosts of your deliverance are thitherward bound. Arise and free yourselves from the yoke of the oppressor, nor fear the bloody bayonets of Lincoln's dogs ! "

This last taunt was flung maliciously and with unmistakable intention at Frank, the only man present in army blue, who still stood on his lofty place. The crowd swayed toward him, now an uncontrollable mob, shouting execrations and vile words and threats, in most hideous tumult. Roused in a moment of physical weakness by the deliberate intent of demagogues, inflamed by whiskey, lost to self-control with the lust of murder in them, they closed round the boy, who was now supported by the man who had failed to drag him to the ground.

Lucetta and Miss Abbot were lookers-on from behind a huge beech-tree, some distance to the rear of the seats, and were fearful of a tragic ending, but powerless to aid. Lucetta felt sick with despair as she saw her premonitions about to be realized, and herself utterly impotent to prevent it. Frank stood in full view, struggling to speak again, but the hand which his brawny companion had placed on his mouth was like an iron clamp.

The men had deserted the spit, attracted by the uproar, and the smoke from the burning fat rose blue as incense. Lucetta was startled by a snapping sound at her ear, and turned her head to look into the barrel of a revolver which Swazey was aiming over her shoulder at Frank's head. She struck at it, but the hand that held it was muscled with steel, and it only swerved aside. There was a loud report, and the next instant a man reeled from the stump, lunging heavily forward to the ground.

Lucetta shrieked, "Oh, Frank is killed!" and sank to her knees and buried her face in Miss Abbot's skirts, while spasms of shuddering racked her body.

The shot instantly sobered the mob, and an appalled silence fell upon them. Then cries of "Shame!" "Catch the murderer!" "Kill him!" "String him up!" rose fiercely. Apprehension made them tremble, and faces but a moment since red with furious passion grew pale with horror. They were not brutes, but men of primal passions, untaught in the higher codes of humanity. They had not guarded themselves against such outbreaks by self-repression and culture. A sense of justice and pity they had in common with all men, and they were moved deeply as they crowded round those who were tearing the clothing from the dying man, shot in the back through the heart. His blood spouted from his breast in a jet and fell in red spray around them, each pulsation growing feebler. The retreat of life was visible to them; it withdrew like early spring frost before the rising sun, gradually, irrevocably, — slowly retiring before an invincible power, it left the glazing eye, the relaxed muscle, the gelid clay. They were potent to destroy but impotent to restore life; before them this miracle of life and death was finished.

The victim had made one feeble effort to speak, but he was quickly past words. No one knew him, not even Frank, for whom he had been slain.

Frank, meantime, stood staring down at the dying man, so powerless that he could not lift a finger. But he was brought to his senses by being roughly dragged to the ground, and a strange voice said : —

"You are under arrest for disturbing a public meeting."

"But they are traitors, and murderers, and Cop— "

But a hand laid over his mouth cut off further speech, and the owner led Frank away to his own buggy and placed him in charge of a man who was seated in it.

"You young fool! don't you know how to keep your mouth shut? You can't stir up Copperheads without gettin' bit."

"Who are you?" asked Frank.

"I 'm Lish Conway, provost marshal for this district. Now you go home as quick as you can, for I don't want another murder on my hands."

CHAPTER XVI

A FRIEND IN NEED

Jim Swazey was of the order of men which is cruel to everything gentle; if a little dog fawned on him, he would kick it away from mere surplus of savagery. He was especially ruthless to women who had worn out his fancy, or crossed his prurient purpose; but he rarely met resistance from those on whom his vagrant fancy fell. Why a man of his nature should have selected a girl like Lucetta as the object of his pursuit is one of the world-old mysteries. Her unveiled repugnance to him only strengthened his resolution to overcome it, and when Frank appeared on the scene it settled into deadly purpose.

There was one woman he could neither impress nor bully. He more than met his match when he met Mrs. Bowles. Her large, strong physique well matched his own; her bitter tongue silenced his, or set him stammering; a glance of her irate, piercing eye — gray as half-chilled steel, it had a red spot within it — searched out the most secret meanness of his soul, and he withered before it, as surely as did the "keerless weed" at her kitchen door, on which she threw hot water.

She intuitively knew Swazey to the core of his bad nature, and reckoned him a bully, a coward, and a most unmanly churl. So that when he climbed the steep hill before her house the afternoon of the barbecue, and asked her for protection till dark, she was prepared for any disclosure he might make, or that she might be able to worm out of him.

She asked briefly and compellingly, "What you been a-doin'?"

He answered sullenly, "I 've been to the barbecue."

"Got into trouble, I reckon?"

The fellow's sullen eye sent her a sidewise glance of hate, and he grinned wolfishly, showing strong, tobacco-stained teeth, but the straining of the upper lip did not betoken mirth. He made no other answer.

"You have — have n't you?" Mrs. Bowles insisted.

He nodded an unwilling assent.

She held in her hand, as if interrupted in reading it, an old newspaper, of a date two months back, printed on coarse yellowish paper, the "Crofton Index," issued at the county seat, strongly Union in its policy.

"Look a' here! Seems to me this fits you pretty well!" and she placed a calloused finger on a paragraph in the telegraphic news. It was an account of a bounty-jumper and deserter, supposed to be an emissary of the Southern Confederacy, who, in

making his escape from Camp Morton, where he was confined awaiting trial, had wrested the gun from the guard, shot and nearly killed him with his own weapon, and, in the excitement following, made good his escape.

"I got it in town yesterday, round some carpet-chain, and, as I don't get a-hold of a paper often, I just thought I 'd read it. It 's mighty interestin' readin', and val'able, too!" And she smiled a sinister, mocking smile, more awful than her frown, under which he quailed and shrank back shuddering.

"You 're a poor sort of a feller! What you 'fraid of? I reckon you done it to help the cause, though bounty-jumpers ain't much to my taste."

"Is there a reward out?" he faltered abjectly, overlooking the fact that he was confirming her suspicions by asking.

"Yes, 'two hundred,' dead or alive."

The poltroon cowered.

"Why, I believe you 're 'fraid I 'll try and get it!" She looked him over with contempt. "I 'm not after blood-money! All I want is to see the cause prosper; and if you 've done these black abolitionists out of a cent, or, better, killed any of them and sent them to burn in the pit for the sake of the cause, I 'm the woman to help you! Though, God knows, I ain't got no use for such poor cattle as you."

The man seemed cowed by the superior strength of her nature and the scorn she heaped on him,

yet resented it, after the manner of his kind, as coming from a woman, and was wicked and angry enough, had he dared, to have slain her on the spot for her contempt and knowledge of him.

"I want to know what I 'm gettin' into first, before I pass my word, Jim. What 'a' you been a-doin' at the barbecue?"

"Well, I aimed to shoot that damned Lincoln dog that 's pushin' himself into everything round here. He tore the badge off of me in meetin'! He 's insulted me every chance he 's got! It 's on account of him I 'm on bail. And he 's cut me out of takin' Lucetta Whittaker to the barbecue."

"Oh, a quarrel over a girl! I might 'a' known it. Men 'll fight over a slip of a girl they take a notion to, like two yaller curs; and they 're always takin' a likin' to the same one, though the good Lord knows he made enough of 'em to go round. And a matter of duty 'll slip by, and they 'll sleep through it side by side, like a pair o' hounds in a kennel." And she broke into a harsh laugh.

The man was furious enough to throttle her. He was not accustomed to self-control, and was only held in check by her extraordinary strength, knowing well he would have fared ill in a contest.

"Him and me ain't done with each other yet," said Swazey menacingly.

"I guess Frank 's able to look out for himself if he is a 'Lincoln dog.' He don't make threats; he acts. Or was it him you killed? I reckon you don't want to hide for anything else but murder."

"No, I did n't kill him. The girl — curse her! — knocked my arm, and I killed a young fellow that 's deputy marshal, — I don't know his name."

"Served him right!" observed Mrs. Bowles, grimly approving. "Come in! Liddy's at the barbecue. She has the only tongue here, hung in the middle and loose at both ends. They 'll not look here for you. Come in."

Swazey entered the kitchen, and Mrs. Bowles opened the door of a closet by the chimney, and, pointing to a trap-door in its ceiling, said : —

"I guess you 'd better get up in the loft. It 's dark up there, but it ain't as dark as the grave." She nodded with grim significance.

The man's lips worked savagely to keep back the curses he would have flung at her had he dared. He mounted a chair, slid back the little trap-door, and drew himself up through the narrow hole by sheer strength.

There he lay the rest of the day, and late in the dusk of the evening, while Liddy Ann was milking, Mrs. Bowles called him to come down. She gave him his supper by no other light than the low kitchen fire.

When he had voraciously eaten a hasty meal, Mrs. Bowles said : —

"I reckon you 'd better make for Bear Den Hollow. It 's a good six mile from here, and they 'll never think of lookin' for you there. They 'll think, from the start you 've got, you 'll be a heap furder off. Just follow the creek down ; they 've

scoured the banks every foot by this time. There 's good hidin' places in the Den, and the railroad 's only four miles south, and you 'd better git into Kentucky as fast as you can. There you 'll be all right. Here 's some powder and shot. Reckon you 've got a gun ? " She handed him a compact bundle as she spoke.

" No, I let mine fall when I stumbled over a root, and did n't have time to pick it up again, they were after me so close," and he swore viciously at his pursuers.

Mrs. Bowles unhooked her sleeve at the wrist-band and rolled it up to her shoulder, displaying an arm as sinewy as the blacksmith's. She opened the meal-chest, full to the brim with corn-meal, and thrust her naked arm down to the bottom and drew up a good-sized parcel, well wrapped up in paper, and handed it to Swazey.

" They 're for the ' cause,' " she said expressively.

He took it, hastily tore off the paper and disclosed a brace of revolvers ; he snapped the triggers and found them in perfect order.

" If the men were all like you, Mrs. Bowles, our cause would succeed," he said, compelled to admiration.

Liddy Ann was heard coming heavily along the board walk, and Mrs. Bowles opened the door and said : —

" Go quick ! Harmless fools like her ain't to be trusted."

CHAPTER XVII

IN BEAR DEN HOLLOW

News in country communities is sporadic; it starts no one knows how, and spreads insidiously. About a week after the flight of Jim Swazey, it was rumored that there was a ghost in Bear Den Hollow. One night, two boys, fishing for "cat" in the deep hole at the mouth of the ravine, had seen a dim figure down in the hollow, which was lighted in flickering spots by an overhead moon. With boyish bravado they had called out: —

"Hi, there! who are you?"

The apparition had sunk into the ground, they averred, before their eyes. The story ran further day by day, spreading like circles in water when a pebble is dropped, till the news reached the hamlet of Appleton, which lay five miles southeast of Ridgely, where it had come to the knowledge of Colonel Gore, who commanded the Home Guards in that section. Orders had been sent to him, as to all the commanding officers of the State militia, to be on the alert for bounty-jumpers, deserters, and instigators of insurrection. Provost-marshals were numerous throughout the State, acting with the Home Guard and those of the civil officers who

were loyal, for in many localities these latter were not to be trusted. The militia was kept on a war footing, a precaution rendered necessary by the discouraging and threatening aspect of affairs.

A description of the deserter from Camp Morton had been furnished Colonel Gore; and the story of the murdered deputy was all about the country. Sheriff Hale had been in search of the murderer, but up to the day Frank Neal met him on the street in Crofton, and told him the story of the "ghost," — with his own interpretation of the mystery, — he had not had the slightest clue, and so he at once made his plans quietly to investigate the affair.

The same afternoon this information was given by Frank to the sheriff, Tapp appeared in Appleton with a supply of tinware suited to the equipment of soldiers, and he sought out the officer to dispose of his wares. Immediately after his transaction with Colonel Gore, a guard of half a dozen men was ordered to make ready as secretly as might be for instant duty, to meet their commanding officer singly, at a place and time appointed, that night.

Neither the colonel nor the sheriff were believers in ghosts, and each strongly suspected this one might materialize into the man he sought, and, without being aware of it, they acted in concert.

Sheriff Hale set off late in the evening with two constables. They rode horseback, on account of the rough roads, which in places were impassable for a vehicle, and they were joined by Frank at

Ridgely. Colonel Gore had the benefit of vicinage, and reached Bear Den Hollow just as the quivering gray of dawn displaced the darkness, before a tinge of sunlight had brightened the sky.

The squad of men accompanying him defiled, like Indians, on the narrow footpath edging the stream. A tumultuous "branch" dashing into the creek, as if glad to escape the gloomy precincts of a large ravine, warned them they had reached their destination. A cold wind made the men shiver as they turned into the little canyon. On the hilltop, a fox barked a sharp warning of approach; buzzards sailed high, with a shrill swish of wings, startled at the unwonted intrusion; a song-sparrow, which has few hours of silence, tinkled in a hidden spot; an alert squirrel darted up a tree, tail lashing, chattering furiously, and continued his flight in mid-air, springing from bough to bough to a place of safety deep in the woods. Further up the glen, the brook threw itself headlong with loud complaint down a tiny precipice, in haste to quit the hateful place; its ceaseless voice dominated sounds of lesser volume. The search party disturbed sleeping snakes, that glided away with a hiss, and routed cold toads from their hiding-places. They crashed through thickets of leather-wood and spicewood, through brakes and ferns, scaled the sides of the ravine with the sure-footedness of goats, — rousing the owls to querulousness, — and brought terror to a little world of insect life, scurrying, flying out of their way.

The sides of the ravine were walled with huge flaked strata of sandstone; and not infrequently great slabs fell from their places and brought up tilted at dangerous angles, checked in their downward progress by boulders or tree-stumps. No difficulty, however great, hindered them in exploring every inch of the glen, but not a trace of human creature could they find.

By a mere chance, the men came together again at a point where a tiny rill told of a sequestered spring. Worried as fox-hounds that have lost trail, jaded and thirsty, they followed up a fissure-like opening to its head, where they discovered a spring beneath a penthouse of rock, so placed that the sun's rays never found it out. It spread in a wide, shallow circle over a bed of white sand thrown up momently in tiny jets, that gently crinkled its surface. The men fell on their knees, hot and tired, glad to drink as humbly as the wild denizens of the place.

The first man at its brink was Tapp, and his quick eye saw on the soft ground the fresh imprint of a human foot; large and firm was the foot that had pressed that tell-tale mould.

The others were following in single file, the colonel at their head. Tapp pointed down, and said to him: —

"I think your man 's here."

The colonel, well versed in Indian lore, stooped and examined the tracks.

"Yes, they 're perfectly fresh. He must have

come just before we got here, and has n't had time to get far away," he said, speaking softly so that only Tapp heard.

The entire squad had collected at the spring, and the colonel gave orders that some should watch the head of this little ravine, while others deployed right and left to scale its sides. The mouth of the larger glen, debouching on the river, was left unguarded, for it could be approached only on foot, and had been searched until they were perfectly satisfied no one was hiding there. The hunt began again, and they gradually closed in to the point agreed on, — the sombre spring, — peering under every bush, behind stumps and boulders, even into fissures in the steep sides. Slowly and warily they came together in a narrowing circle.

At last a sharp, surprised cry warned them the quarry was run to earth. About a hundred feet up the glen, wedged under a great slab of sandstone fallen from the wall above, and held totteringly aslant by a shattered sapling, quivering to further fall, crouched the murderer. A slight tilt of the great rock would have released it and crushed him; but it was his sole chance, and, when chances are narrowed to unity, men take desperate ones.

Like a creature at bay, as the men surrounded his refuge in response to his captor's cry, the prisoner sprang to his feet, cursing fiercely. He glared at them from under his mat of tangled hair, like a trapped beast. His face was pale from hunger,

and his eyes hollow from sleeplessness. He stood defiant with superb courage, determined not to be taken, hopeless as the situation was. The sheer wall of stone behind him prevented surprise from that direction, so that he had but to guard his right and left hand from behind the perilous ambush of the rocking stone.

"Surrender!" commanded Colonel Gore.

Not a word did Swazey say, but with a revolver in each hand, as if determined to work as much destruction as he could before he himself should meet it, opened a rapid fire which flew wide of the mark. Waiting for orders, the colonel's men did not, at first, return fire. But one youth, with the fighting passion for the first time roused, rushed on Swazey as if to tear him from his ambuscade; a shot, and he sank down in his tracks, apparently lifeless. At this, pitiless fury took possession of the squad, who, deaf to the orders of their officer, fell on Swazey as if to tear him from his den like a hunted wolf. Ill-trained, untried as soldiers, they forgot discipline, forgot their revolvers in their holsters; not a shot did they fire, but made ready to use the weapons nature had given them, their brawny fists.

The sharp report of Swazey's revolvers, which the echoes repeated clamorously, filled the hollow until his ammunition was gone. At bay and desperate, he turned to the cruel wall behind him and tried to scale it, tearing the flesh from his nails in his frantic grip. He managed to drag

himself up a few yards, his chest heaving with his sobbing breath. The rock above him would not have furnished foothold for a bird. When he realized escape was impossible, he beat his head against the cliff again and again. His pursuers were the better men, agile, sure-footed, and used to climbing the steep sides of the ravine. Two of them soon dragged him struggling to the ground.

"It 's McCune and no mistake!" said Tapp, as he looked the prisoner over.

"Who?" asked Colonel Gore.

"The deserter — bounty-jumper — and ex-rebel soldier that nearly brained the guard at Camp Morton!"

"It 's Jim Swazey, the blacksmith's hand, that tried to kill Frank Neal at the barbecue, and did kill the deputy marshal," said another man.

The prisoner stood with a hand tightly gripped by each of his captors, his lips working nervously over his teeth, his chest heaving deeply, and his wicked eyes glancing quickly from one to another of the men surrounding him. He offered no resistance, but seemed to have given up hopelessly. As the last man finished speaking, he wrested his right hand free, and quick as a flash drew a knife from his breast and aimed it at the heart of one of his guards. Tapp as quickly struck down the miscreant's hand.

"We 've had enough of this!" cried one of the men.

"Hang him! hang him!"

"Yes, hang him! He 's had his chance!" And the rope which was to have bound him as a prisoner was unwound for the fearful office of his execution.

Tapp tried to prevent it; he implored them to let the law take its course, but all were against him, even Colonel Gore. As well try to stop a hurricane by a silken scarf as to check by rational speech the wild passion of men whose blood cries for blood. In an instant the hapless wretch was bound, the noose was about his neck. One man threw the end of the rope over the limb of a huge pine-tree that moaned distressfully in a passing gust. Eager hands grasped it, and ran with it its length, dragging the wretch off his feet till he dangled in mid-air, plunging and writhing hideously, even cursing till the tightening rope throttled him. The noise and excitement of the fearful scene made the men deaf to all other sounds, so that the approach of hurrying feet was unheeded. The sheriff and his men burst on them, horrified to behold the body of a man spinning at the end of a rope like a plummet.

"This proceeding is illegal!" shouted Hale in agitation. "The State of Indiana does not recognize lynch law as anything more than murder."

"Sir, the State of Indiana authorizes, by a proclamation of the governor, that this man shall be taken dead or alive, and, further, I am authorized by martial law to use my authority at discretion. This is a sort of drum-head court-martial," said the colonel grimly.

"Good heavens!" cried Frank Neal. "Cut him down quick! Don't you see he 's nearly dead?"

"Let him die!" was the fierce answer, accompanied with curses.

"See what he 's done!" and the men pointed up the ravine where lay the body of the boy, forgotten till then.

The wretch at the end of the rope was now as quiet as his victim, but for the pink-tinged froth bubbling from his lips, and an occasional roll of his bulging eyes and spasmodic drawing up of his extremities. On this ghastly spectacle these men, who were ordinarily peaceable and law-abiding citizens, looked remorselessly, unmoved by Frank's appeal or the sheriff's protest.

Suddenly Frank sprang forward and slashed the taut rope with his pocket-knife, but too late. The lifeless body fell to the ground in a limp heap, hideously grotesque.

CHAPTER XVIII

TREATS OF FAILURES

After the tragedy of Bear Den Hollow the Knights kept in the background, impressed at last by the fact that there was a terrific, silent power opposed to them, which they in their infatuated ignorance had arrogantly disregarded, — the Law and the will of the determined but patient head of the commonwealth. They were further disheartened when the news of the ludicrous panic, satirically called the Battle of Pogue's Run, permeated to their remote neighborhood. These rural Hoosiers had their own stubborn idea of courage, and were ashamed and disgusted at the poltroonery of their leaders. Many, on being enlightened as to the real ends of the order, which they had been taught was for self-defense in view of certain contingencies, deserted the cause.

On the convention of 1863 the Knights had built their hopes, for they had carefully planned to control it for their own ends. Governor Morton was fully informed of their plans through his secret agents, and ready for any emergency; and when a great crowd had gathered in the State House grounds, and, as Harv Wilson said, "every-

thing was comin' our way," the cadenced tread of soldiery sounded above the strident voice of the speaker spouting treason. A scene of ludicrous panic ensued; men fled in every direction. So demoralized were they, they did not stop to watch the passage of the artillery, which did not halt, but paraded with set faces and twinkling eyes, amused at the laughable dismay of the foe in this the least sanguinary battle in which they had taken part.

These fustian Knights returned to their homes humiliated, but were not deterred from continuing their plottings. They had been fully enlightened, however, on certain points, — the thorough grasp of the situation by the governor, and his inflexible determination to crush them, quietly if possible, forcibly if need be. Their deplorable failure to carry out their designs in so small a matter as seizing the State Democratic Convention convinced them that the time had not yet come for the uprising urged by the leaders; and a warning from Governor Morton, that if they wished to keep their heads from the noose they must abandon their treasonable schemes, helped to these conclusions.

But another and even greater failure was to follow. With wonderful prescience on the part of the authorities, Morgan's raid had been anticipated, and the Knights, who had hoped to turn this also to their benefit, again failed through imperfect organization. They were ready with their "Morgan sign," but not with their assistance, for they had not counted on the prompt action of the militia,

and were disconcerted. About a week after the lynching of Swazey, that intrepid guerrilla appeared on the outskirts of Middle County and halted for a moment at Harv Wilson's door for provender. Morgan laughed contemptuously as Harv made the fantastic sign agreed upon, and turned his jaded animals into the flourishing cornfield to trample at will, while his men feasted royally on the bounteous harvest-dinner spread, as if in waiting for them, the guests having fled at the first sight of the long, irregular line of galloping horsemen. Morgan had been led to hope for coöperation from the Knights, and when they failed him, either from fear, or lack of dispatch in making ready, he did not spare them. He singled them out for his contempt and showed it plainly, the "Morgan sign" aiding him.

The bold marauder came and went like a flashing meteor, while his Hoosier allies stood agape, surprised into total forgetfulness of the arms they had secreted in their oat-bins, meal-chests, and other unique hiding-places for this very emergency, and they watched him vanish in clouds of dust, astride their best horses, closely pursued by the Home Guard.

But treason in Indiana died hard, and none of these misadventures made a lasting impression, nor taught them that there was a vigilance exercised by the governor, strong as it was patient, which neither slumbered nor slept.

When the terrible news of the lynching of Swazey

was known in the neighborhood, then, indeed, they were brought to a realization of their danger. The Home Guard, up to that time, had been held in contempt as too cowardly to fight with the armies in the field, and too pusillanimous to be feared at home. That they might use extreme measures had never entered their minds. But force, rough brutality, successfully applied, brings recognition with a certainty which neither mild persuasion nor gentle remonstrance can command.

For weeks the hanging was discussed stealthily, as if the arm of military power was stretched out, ready to throttle the first offender that dared speak openly.

The timid members of the Vestibule dropped off, with those who disapproved the designs of the order, but the half dozen members of the "Third Degree," of which Harv Wilson was one, were more secret and active than ever. Their numerous discomfitures crystallized their rather indefinite plans into a definite aim of gigantic proportion and incredible audacity. The name of the order was now changed to the Sons of Liberty, to escape the odium of the old designation, but it was of no avail; "Knights" they were, and "Knights" they were to remain to the end of time.

The men who continued in the order took desperate chances, — watched as they were by the secret emissaries of the governor, — and trusted only those who were bold, daring, and strong in the cause.

The autumn and winter passed away in the vicinity of Ridgely without further hostile demonstration on the part of the Temple; the Knights were made the object of unceasing surveillance by the officers of the peace, although they gave no ground for complaint. Harv Wilson and a chosen few made frequent trips to Indianapolis, and Tapp disappeared from the neighborhood. No one was surprised at this, however, for a rag-peddler seldom braved the discomforts of winter and bad roads to ply his trade; he worked only in summer.

The following spring, the absorbing questions were the presidential election and the call for men for one year's enlistment. The people feared another draft, and the old antagonism was aroused to even greater violence. In the early spring the news reached this secluded hamlet of Ridgely of the successful raid of the Peace Men in the adjoining State of Illinois, and the Knights gloried over it as a victory for their cause. They resented the degrading of McClellan and the promotion of Grant, so that all things seemed to work together for evil throughout that spring of 1864. It would seem that complications were serious enough without the added rancor of a campaign year. To further involve the affairs of Indiana, the Knights of the Golden Circle, masquerading under the name of Peace party, ostensibly seceded from the Democratic party, yet nevertheless controlled it.

Apparently none of these events ruffled the stag-

nant pool of life in and about Ridgely. But who knows what riots and tragedies go on under the turgid surface of such stagnation?

When spring broke, it found the people in the Neal neighborhood about their accustomed tasks. Frank Neal had returned to the army, and was soon to be mustered out, as his three years' term of enlistment had nearly expired.

At the blacksmith's shop, the usual company gathered to discuss "war news" to the ring of Alec's anvil, — a company a little more poverty-stricken and a little more discouraged than it had been the previous spring, for they could see no hope of peace. Grant was advancing on Richmond, and they believed Lee invincible.

Swazey was never mentioned, and a boy of the neighborhood took his place at the bellows. Alec himself had quit the Knights after that night in Harv's cabin, but remained faithful to his oath not to betray them.

The old and young spinster had remained the winter through in the lonely cabin, Lucetta studying, Miss Abbot teaching; and the bond of affection seemed to grow stronger each day between the two, for whom no one else seemed particularly to care. Lucetta had recovered sufficiently from the loss of both parents to enjoy to the utmost her books and the society of her wise friend. Her formerly too serious air was tempered by gleams of girlish brightness, but she could never be vivacious, so subdued was her spirit by years of hard

drudgery and poverty. Her appearance had improved: she was no longer so slight as to merit Mrs. Stump's description of "slab-sided;" slender she would always be; release from constant service, and the good plain food Miss Abbot insisted on, had rounded her figure prettily. Even the contour of her face had changed, taking on a fine oval; her soft, dark eyes were lighted with eager intelligence; and her hair, glossily brown as the "buck-eye" nut, shaded a low, smooth forehead from which the lines of care had vanished. Altogether, hers was a pleasing countenance to look upon.

Mrs. Bowles and Liddy Ann had passed the desolate winter months in the dreary task of cutting carpet-rags, Liddy Ann's tongue babbling like a mountain brook, Mrs. Bowles silent and grim as the rock that walled its channel.

Who does not love life at each recurring spring, whose glories are visible and are the archetype of that never-ending existence, the sum of all our hopes, the despair of certain knowledge!

It was with joy the farm-boy turned the long furrows in Mrs. Bowles's west field, and even that grim creature felt faint stirrings of pleasure as she followed the plough, dropping corn. But no sound fell from her lips to show her sympathy with his mood, which was of the blithest, for there was the unforgotten ecstasy of the meadow-lark's song to cheer him; the odor of fresh-turned earth to float about him; the delight of faint green in the pasture

to feast his eye; the placid content of the cattle, as they nibbled the short tender herbage, to add to his content: all tutored him in thankfulness for the common but bountiful pleasures Nature gives for the mere taking in early spring.

At Neal's, life had moved on with its accustomed placidity and lavish bounty. They planted their corn and waited for the harvest, accepting serenely good or bad.

Thus spring slipped away till the corn was nearly ready to "lay by," and no storm had troubled the life of Ridgely and its outlying farmsteads. Not even the rag-peddler had intruded into its calm, and they feebly wished he might come; for he did not drive hard bargains, and was lively and "friendly," a homely word that meant much of good-fellowship among them.

CHAPTER XIX

AN OBJECT OF SUSPICION

Mrs. Bowles's spring-house, through which had been led a sparkling brook, the outpouring of the spring near by, was perhaps a hundred yards from the kitchen door, halfway down the hillside. The milk-crocks were sunk nearly to the top in its cold, crystal water. Mrs. Bowles had been skimming the cream for the churning, for the flighty Liddy Ann was never allowed to intrude there. As she came from her work to the house, her quick eye caught sight of a white horse jogging down the road with a hitch peculiar to an animal with the stringhalt.

It was fully a quarter of a mile away, down the straight road, but she knew without a doubt it was the tin-peddler's "nag" and van.

"Drat him!" she muttered, as she gazed from under her hand which shielded her eyes from the morning sun.

"What's he back here again for? Nothin' good, I swow!"

It was only about six o'clock in the morning, but all the neighborhood had breakfasted by that hour, as a thin trail of blue wood-smoke from dying fires testified, and had gone about their daily avo-

cations. The sound of Liddy washing clothes in the back kitchen; the voice of the boy urging his lazy horse as he ploughed for the last time before the corn was "laid by;" clucking, querulous hens with their "second hatch" scratching around the door-yard; the bees busy loading their thighs with pollen in the flaunting hollyhocks in the garden; the entangled gnats shrilling from the gummy stalks of the "painted ladies;" the whetting of the scythe from the oat-fields near by; the faint rasping of a cross-cut saw from the woods, — all told of a busy, simple life of labor.

Suddenly a pea-fowl screeched discordantly from the top of a tall pine-tree on the bluff.

"It 'll rain before another sun-up," muttered Mrs. Bowles. For thereabout the cry of that bird was firmly believed to be an unfailing sign of rain.

By this time the white horse and rickety wagon had drawn so near that a tinkling could be heard, and the ribs of the scraggy horse showed plainly.

"Drat that feller!" she repeated. "Come back here again, has he? I don't trust him! He 's a-peddlin' for something more than tinware! He means mischief, or I lose my guess!"

Her lips were closed tight as she watched him open her gate at the far end of the long lane. She took a sudden resolution, and with her to resolve was to do, so that before he had fastened the gate she was in the kitchen. She said to Liddy Ann: —

"I 'm a-goin' over to Josh Miller's. The baby 's took awful bad ag'in! They 've sent for me!"

"My! too bad! Who 'd they send?" asked Liddy eagerly, with an unquenchable curiosity to learn the most trivial detail, peculiar to her.

Mrs. Bowles ignored her question, with her accustomed disdain of her handmaiden when she considered her prying unwarrantable, but not the slightest impression did it make on that irrepressible newsmonger.

"Mebby I 'll be home to dinner, and mebby I won't," said Mrs. Bowles, as she took from its nail her light summer shawl of delaine. Putting on her sun-bonnet, she passed out of the kitchen door, leaving Liddy Ann baffled. In such narrow lives, the slightest incident is of interest; and when one is born with an acute desire to know everything, however trifling, as was Liddy Ann, disappointment is real pain, and she sighed as she resumed her work, with the comment: —

"Miz Bowles is that gosterin' and masterful!"

Mrs. Bowles disappeared around the corner of the house, and, what was surprising, into it again, for she opened the front door of the sacred "parlor-room," disappeared, and closed it quickly after her.

The house had been built before the township road was constructed. Such roads are placed at stated intervals provided for by the rectangular survey of the State; thus it happened that the new one ran back of her dwelling, and the lane from it led up to the kitchen, and the front of the house was toward Honey Creek.

The peddler came on, with his wares jingling pleasantly. When he reached the little orchard by the kitchen, he tied his lank beast to the palings and walked with swift jauntiness up to the door. Liddy Ann's loud rubbing on the washboard drowned his approaching steps, which were light to stealthiness, compared to the lumbering tread of the men who walk always on the bosom of the earth or in furrows.

"Howd'y, Liddy Ann!" he called out cheerfully from the doorway.

The tin-peddler was a friendly soul, and had adopted the customs of the community with surprising quickness, one of which was to call every one, from infancy to middle age, who was not venerable enough to merit the prefix of "uncle" or "aunt," by his Christian name, and he had been given his from the first. There was an amazing number of honorary "Uncle Johnnies" and "Aunt Betties" in the community, and, with the sagacity of a politician, Tapp knew them all and so addressed them.

Liddy gave a scream and exclaimed: —

"My, how you flustered me, Oliver! Why, when did you come?" She left off work, and, stripping the suds from her bare arms, pushed the "scolding-locks" up from her neck with a sweep of her puckered hand, preening as naturally as a wet hen. She came toward him mincingly, as was her manner in company.

"I'm powerful glad to see you! Won't you come in and rest your hat?" she asked.

"I just got into the neighborhood this morning. I can't come in, for I've got to go nearly to Crofton to-day. Is Mrs. Bowles well? Thought I'd just stop as I was passing, to see if she wanted anything to-day."

"My, it's too bad! Miz Bowles ain't home. She had to go over to Josh Miller's. The baby's took bad ag'in. It do beat all how that baby gits sick! Puniest thing I ever did see. Set down, won't you?" she urged, handing him a splint-bottomed chair.

"Guess I will for a minute. It ain't often I get such a chance as this, Liddy, to see you alone. Most as good as sparkin', ain't it?" he said audaciously.

The delighted Liddy tittered and said: —

"Oh, go 'long! None of your foolin'."

"You say Mrs. Bowles is gone?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm not sorry, Liddy Ann. Are you?"

"I never thought nothin' about it. But why ain't you sorry?" she asked, jerking her head with clumsy coquetry.

"As if I need to tell you! But I've got to go. Got to stop at Alec's to have a shoe set. Wish I could stay in such good company all morning."

Liddy Ann bridled and her face flamed, for there is no woman, however great a fool, and however persistently overlooked by the other sex, that

is not amenable to tender insinuations. Man's flattery makes itself felt, if it comes from the right person.

Poor Liddy had never had a "feller," and this speech seemed promising. She trembled and giggled, gratified and agitated.

The peddler could scarcely refrain a smile at her undisguised elation. His keen eye watched her simpering face attentively meantime, much as a doctor watches a patient after administering a potent drug, in order to carry out his purpose at the critical moment. Any one less a simpleton than Liddy Ann could have seen there was more deliberate intention than tender sentiment in the look he bent upon her. At last, with an effrontery that completed his triumph, he planted an explosive kiss on her lips. Her delight was pitiable, because his deceit was so apparent. He started through the door, then turned back as if an afterthought had prompted him.

"Oh, Liddy Ann, I saw lots of young squirrels in the woods this morning, coming along. Do you like them?"

"Well, I just reckon I do."

"I 've got my gun along, but I ain't got any powder. I 'low to get some at Crofton to-day. Wish I had some now and I 'd shoot you a mess of squirrels."

"Land sakes! Ain't that funny, now? Miz Bowles 's got some. She keeps it in the feed-bin. I found it t' other day when I went to mix shorts

in the milk for the weanin' calf. I come a-dashin' in, and sez I: 'La, Miz Bowles, here's a bag of somethin' I found in the bin with the shorts,'" and Liddy paused for breath.

"Queer place to keep it," interrupted Tapp.

"Yes, I thought so, too. But Miz Bowles, she said 't was powder, — she used to shoot like airy man when she was a girl, she said, — and she 's afraid to have it in the house, for fear a spark might reach it some way."

"Where did she get it? I 'd like to get some, too," cautiously pumped the peddler.

"La, I can't say. I don't know what she wants of it, noway. She ain't got no gun now, leastways not as I know of. When I asked what 's the sense of havin' such dangerous truck 'round, she up and said she did n't reckon I could see *sense* in much of anythin', seein' I was mighty scarce of it; that it was her business; there was times when it might be needed, deserters, soldiers, and bounty-jumpers runnin' 'round the country. And she brought some of it into the house. An' me that skeered of it!"

"You don't think you could let me have some, do you?"

"I reckon I might find you a little. But Miz Bowles is awful sharp about missin' things. So 't won't be more than half a teacupful." True to her domestic instincts, Liddy Ann measured by what was most familiar.

"Oh, that 's enough! A little will go a good ways in this case!" said Tapp, chuckling.

Liddy Ann went to the old corner cupboard, and, standing on a chair, reached to the top shelf, and took down a cracked teapot, too worthless for use, yet kept for some association, after the strange manner of women. It was empty. She tried a decrepit sugar-bowl with like results; and lastly peered into an old earthen jar, which likewise proved empty.

"Why, they ain't none! Whatever could Miz Bowles ha' done with it! She filled them things, for I saw her."

Her vapid face grew blanker, and the peddler looked disappointed. With a few words of parting, Tapp went away, and Liddy resumed her interrupted task.

No sooner was the peddler out of sight than Mrs. Bowles softly opened the front door of the "parlor-room" and cautiously took her way to the wood, whence came the droning sound of sawing. Her face was livid with some emotion that was not fear; it was that mingling of rage and disgust one feels at the involuntary baffling by a fool, from which there is no security when chance thrusts him into one's plans.

The men, Alec Rush and Jake Burrows, were sawing, with the deliberation that comes of practice and promises long staying power. The bright yellow sawdust showered down in little heaps, and the pungent odor of sap from green logs filled the air and gave premonition of future trouble for the housewife from clouds of smoke.

Hearing only the screech of the dull saw, they were not aware of Mrs. Bowles's presence until her harsh, dominant voice broke on their ears, causing them to stop work so suddenly that the saw quivered through its whole length in the heart of the log.

"Anybody here but you two?" she asked, without preliminary greetings.

"Why, howd'y! You pretty near skeered us, Mis' Bowles," said Alec Rush, with a good-natured laugh. "No, there ain't nobody here but us."

"I always told you men folks not to be so fresh with that tin-peddler," she said, going straight to the point. "But you are such blinkards, you can't see an inch before your noses"—

"Oh, pshaw now, Mis' Bowles, you 're that suspicious," interrupted Jake.

"And you 're such a trustin' fool, Jake Burrows! You 'll let anybody skin you out of your hide before you know it."

The man flushed angrily, but did not resent the taunt, for his reputation was established by a deal in "green goods," as he well knew.

"What 's up now?"

"I told you a week ago to tell Harv Wilson to come and take off that stuff that 's in my bin."

"La, now, Mis' Bowles, I clean forgot it! I did for a fact!" said Jake, with affability that exasperated Mrs. Bowles.

"I might 'a' knowed I could n't trust a man to do anything!" she said bitterly.

"What harm 's done?" asked Alec, who with Jake's assistance was getting out firewood. He had allowed all his stock to be consumed, and in consequence was obliged to suspend his usual labor till his wife's wants were supplied, she having rebelled against picking up chips to cook with, that morning.

Mrs. Bowles stepped close to the men and said, in a low, rasping undertone, "That man 's a spy!"

The men laughed.

"Why, he knows all the 'grips' clean through, from the Vestibule to the Third Degree. He 's helped institute every lodge in Middle County!" cried Jake, who ardently supported the "cause."

"And he 's got letters from 'em all, — even Vallandigham!" said Alec, who, although he had left the order, knew their secrets and kept them inviolate for potent reasons.

"We 're well acquainted with him," he said emphatically.

"You 're well acquainted with him, but you don't *know* him till you go in the house and shet the door and live with him!" she grimly insisted.

"Why, woman, he 's a 'high muck-a-muck'!"

"He ain't nothin' of the kind! He 's a nigger-lover! a black abolitionist! a spy! — and I can prove it!" She then proceeded with a narration of Tapp's talk with Liddy Ann.

"I 've always suspicioned him! But you men never pay no attention to weemen-folks. You 're so much pearter!" she said sarcastically.

"Looks something like it!" admitted Jake.

"Nobody knows what that fool Liddy Ann 'll do next! And that powder and shot must be took off this very night, and that there box marked 'Sunday-school books' too!"

And Mrs. Bowles turned abruptly into the path that led to Josh Miller's.

The two men left the saw in the log and walked off toward the smithy. When they reached it they closed and locked the doors, and, with that utter lack of caution common to the unsophisticated, began to talk the matter over.

They had artlessly supposed that locking the door would be sufficient security against eavesdropping or interruption. Moreover, Mrs. Rush did not know of their return, and she had been instructed to tell any one in need of the blacksmith's service that he had gone to get firewood, a very valid excuse among them for suspending any task, for the claims of the cook were paramount to ordinary business, and time was not precious.

The two men continued to talk in subdued tones compared to their robust, vehement ordinary out-of-door voices, but not so softly that they might not be heard by any one who cared to listen attentively. Indeed, their voices drowned the jangling of the harness as the peddler led his old white horse up to the shop. He, being always on the alert and quick of hearing, heard voices within and instantly caught his own name.

Tapp paused and listened.

Alec Rush said: —

"If the old woman 's right, and Tapp *is* a spy, it won't take Harv Wilson long to put him out of the way."

"I reckon he 'll be at the meetin' at Harv's to-morrow night."

"'T won't take Harv that long! He 'll do the business to-night!"

Tapp grasped the situation at once. He had been spied on by that "she-devil," as he called Mrs. Bowles, and he knew he must get away instantly. He led the horse back to the wagon, a quarter of a mile away, where he had left it in the creek to soak its rattling wheels while the shoe was being set. He harnessed slowly, to give the conspirators time, then drove leisurely up to the shop, singing loudly and blithely. His old horse drew up before the shop, and by this time the doors were standing wide open.

Without a change from his usual cordial manner, Tapp called out cheerfully: —

"Howd'y! Glad to see you again! Got a job for you, Alec. My horse has a loose shoe, and I 've got to make Crofton to-day. Can you set it now?"

The smith looked somewhat red, and cast an uneasy look at his companion. Hardly able to control his embarrassment, he answered, "Yes, I reckon I can," and got his tools ready.

Tapp laughed and jested till the shoe was set, and then, driving off with a cheery good-day, he resumed his tune, and was still singing as far as they could hear him.

CHAPTER XX

THE RESCUE

As Tapp drove along the lonely by-road, the urgent necessity for speedy departure presented itself.

"I 've got to get out of here instantly, that 's certain," he mused. "I must n't go to Crofton, for that 'll put them on the sheriff's plans. It won't do to go to Neal's, for Frank is n't at home and I won't bother the old man. There 's not another loyal man I can look to in this section. Guess I 'll have to ask Lucetta Whittaker's help, as I once told her. She can pilot me in the dark over the 'backbone' to the Greensboro road, and I can catch the midnight train. She 's brave and loyal. I want to get off without leaving a trace behind as to how or when I went. They 'll be after me like bloodhounds to-night, but I 'm used to throwing such brutes off the scent, and I 'll do it now. I must report to the governor before twenty-four hours."

Tapp drove two miles farther on the Crofton road, when he reached a stretch of woods so densely grown with underbrush as to be impenetrable. Here he stopped, and, after carefully scanning the

highway up and down to assure himself no one was in sight, he alighted from the wagon and deliberately laid down the rail-fence and drove through the gap he had made.

It was now about eleven o'clock, the universal dinner-hour thereabout, where the people breakfasted at break of day. Meals were the only things they attended to with unfailing punctuality, and the peddler knew that every one would be at dinner. He carefully replaced the rails, drove into the woods as far as it was possible to make his way, unhitched and removed the harness from the old horse, which gave a great shake when free and at once began cropping grass. He then took the wagon and forced it deep into the coppice, till it could not be seen from any point; he even straightened up the hazel boughs that he had bent, so as to leave no trace of disorder that any chance passer-by might notice. The sward was thick and left no wheel-tracks. He patted the old horse on the shoulder and said: —

"Old Pomp, I 've got to leave you now for good, but you 'll not starve, and there 's plenty of water."

Tapp walked straight on through the wood to where the line of sycamores indicated the course of Honey Creek. When he reached the creek he followed it down-stream, keeping out of the way of fishermen and persons in canoes, and losing a good deal of time in taking these precautions. In following the curves of the stream he walked nearly

five miles, and it was mid-afternoon when he reached the land whereon the Whittaker cabin stood.

Mrs. Bowles's pea-fowl had not been a false prophet, for the sky was now overcast and a moist, fretting wind had risen.

"If this wind lulls," mused Tapp, "it will rain to-night and be black as pitch. Now, sometimes girls are afraid of the dark when they are not afraid of the devil. They're such contrary creatures!" and he anxiously scanned the sky.

He climbed the steep, narrow path from the landing, where Lucetta's canoe was bobbing gayly in the current, keeping a wary outlook, and, as his head came on a level with the field, gazed keenly around before he ventured out of the ravine. The stunted corn rustled in the teasing wind, birds fluttered anxiously about in expectation of the storm, but there was neither sight nor sound of human folk, and he walked as unconcernedly up to the cabin as any other chance visitor would have done.

He found Lucetta hard at work with a slate and algebra, for it had been definitely settled, by the aid of friends, that she was to enter Waveland Academy the second week of September to prepare herself for teaching.

"Howd'y!" he called out to the girl through the open door. "Don't want anything in my line, do you?"

"Not to-day. I'm glad to see you. Won't you come in?" she said cordially, for they had long since formed an acquaintance.

He accepted the invitation, and asked with cheery interest: —

"Are you all alone? I 'd think you 'd have the blue-devils here by yourself."

"Yes, I am alone. When I 'm busy I don't get lonely."

"There 's no one about, then, but you?"

She perceived a shade of anxiety in his manner, usually so jocose and happy.

"No one. Nor has there been this whole afternoon. Miss Abbot 's gone to write a letter for Uncle Billy to his son in the army."

"I 'm glad of that, Miss Lucetta, for I 'm in a fix and no mistake. That old Bowles woman 's turned informer, and the whole pack will be on me to-night. Do you think you 've got enough grit to help a hunted man escape?" and he looked at her smilingly, without the least show of fear.

"You 're joking," she said, unable from his light manner to believe in his sincerity.

"Never was more in earnest in my life. You remember what I told you the night of the jail delivery? Well, it 's come."

Lucetta started in surprise, and said hastily: —

"It was you, then? I 've often thought so."

"Yes," said Tapp simply.

"And you were the man I saw under the oak-tree, and the handkerchief was a signal to Frank in the bushes? I have suspected so since, but have thought it safer not to know certainly about either of you."

"You are wise enough for a man to put his life in your hands," he said admiringly. "If Oliver Tapp don't get out of here this night, it's all up with him!"

He then told her all that he had learned, and she was far more disturbed than he.

"If you do fall into the hands of Wilson, he'll show you no mercy. You don't know him."

"Don't I!" said Tapp significantly.

"But what can you do? I can't think of a plan myself. Every road will be watched, even the crossings at the creek," said the girl.

She meditated deeply a few moments.

"I think I can take you through the 'Shades.'"

"'Shades'! That sounds rather ominous," interrupted Tapp flippantly.

"I mean the wild glen, called the 'Shades,' three or four miles down the creek, not far from Wilson's place. They'll never think of your being bold enough to come into their own territory. We can go through that, and from there it is not far to the Greensboro road, where you can reach the railroad."

"That's good! I want to get to Indianapolis as soon as I can. Must, in fact."

"Of course you'll have to stay here till night."

"Yes, and the schoolma'am must n't know, either. The fewer people in the secret the better, besides being safer for Miss Abbot should she be questioned, for they call her a 'Black Abolitionist' now, all over the neighborhood. You have never

told your own exploits, I infer, or I should have heard of it."

"Not to a soul! Yes, you are right. I'll keep this secret, too. Well, you can hide in the haymow till I come for you, and that will be when it's safe."

Tapp took up his hat to go, and Lucetta said: —

"Wait, let me get you something to eat. You've had no dinner. You'll need food for the long tramp you'll have to take."

"It would be welcome," confessed Tapp. "Just fix it up so I can take it to my retreat."

At five o'clock Miss Abbot came home. The gray clouds hung low, and a drizzling rain set in.

Lucetta had prepared supper, and after it was eaten and the night work done they settled down to their evening occupations, to which the pupil gave her usual composed attention. By eight o'clock, Miss Abbot, weary with the long day, sought her bed, leaving Lucetta still busy with her books. When she was convinced Miss Abbot was sleeping soundly, Lucetta changed her apparel, putting on the strong woolsey gown she wore about her rough morning work and her heavy calfskin shoes. She let herself out quietly, and when she reached the log barn she called softly within: —

"Ready?"

"Ready!" came the reply, and she heard Tapp scramble down the side of the barn from the loft.

"I've had a good nap, and feel up to anything," he said cheerfully.

She could not but admire the buoyant courage of the man, which was prompted by genuine fearlessness and sincere love of duty. She surmised that he was trusted in high places, from the fact that he had been given this commission involving disgrace, danger, even death, and that he accepted it cheerfully with all the risks it involved, for the good of the commonwealth.

But she could not know what almost superhuman effort it required to prevent the culmination in revolution of the widespread schemes which he had discovered. She supposed the most serious disaffection to be merely local and comparatively harmless, but not entirely without risk to those who actively opposed the malcontents. Nevertheless, she took the part chance assigned her, and its occasions seemed to meet her continually; not opportunities for the display of great valor that would furnish subjects for triumphal song, but obscure deeds that would never be known or rewarded.

She and Tapp scrambled down the ravine path to the creek. The sky was overcast with clouds, which the rising wind marshaled like battalions, but the night was dark, though not of the pitchy blackness of a moonless sky; for had that planet been visible, it would have been seen to be on the wane.

He spoke for the first time when she unloosed the canoe.

"I 'm sorry I can't help you, but I can't manage

a canoe, and I 've no notion of landing us both in the water at this crisis."

"I know the canoe as well as a rocking-chair, so leave it to me. You sit a little back of the centre, and, when we pass the fords and get into the riffle, sit quietly and be careful, or we 'll capsize."

When they were seated, Lucetta took up her long paddle and shoved off, but kept well within shore, under the blacker duskiness of the overhanging hemlocks, which here cast long shadows across the creek when there was light, and intensified the obscurity.

Suddenly there was a whippoorwill's call, then another and a third.

"It 's late for whippoorwills," Lucetta said softly and unsuspiciously. "They call mostly at dusk."

Tapp laughed a short, harsh laugh.

"You don't mean "— she asked breathlessly.

"I mean we 've got off just in the nick of time. The hunt 's begun," he said coolly. "Rest on your oar, let her go with the current. These countrymen have ears as sharp as weasels'."

Lucetta did as he bade, using the paddle only to escape obstructions. The cries of the whippoorwills grew fainter in the distance as they glided on.

"We are going away from the hunt toward Harv Wilson's," Tapp observed. "They don't expect the game to run into the dog's kennel."

"We leave the creek half a mile this side of Harv's," she said.

Once a long, wailing "O—a—k—houn" sounded, weirdly terrifying. Then only did Tapp seem in the least impressed.

"Ah! the 'Third Degree' is out! Something like a slave-drive, minus the bloodhounds," he muttered.

The drifting canoe was utterly noiseless, the waterway was deserted for the highways and by-ways by the man-hunters; for it was well known by them that Tapp could not manage a canoe, as one attempt had ended in his ignominious ducking, to their great enjoyment.

After hours, as it seemed to Lucetta, they reached the sheer cliff that indicated the precincts of the place known as the "Shades." At this point the cliff rose straight from the water to a height of two hundred and fifty feet, following the windings of the stream. At first sight it appeared to be an unbroken wall that it would be impossible to scale. It was bare of verdure or shrubs of any kind. At the height of one hundred and fifty feet, there overhung a shelf-like projection of stone along its entire face, which, from the water-course below, seemed a ledge too narrow to furnish foothold for any creature but a bird. In one of the inward curves of this wall was a narrow cleft from top to bottom, which nature seemed to have riven for the outpouring of a "spring branch." But if one pushed through this narrow cleft and followed the stream, it led into a deep, dark canyon on which the stranger came unaware, but

which was well known to the inhabitants of that region. Nearly halfway through the canyon, a dome-shaped formation of stone filled up the passage from side to side, and down its face fell the little brook, widespread in a thin, crinkled sheet like glass, and, only for its gentle lisping, it might have been taken for a crystal cap. The water did not dash down the declivity, but slid gently over with a soft murmur. A narrow, difficult track led to the top of this dome, and a long grapevine hung down accommodatingly to assist in the ascent, which was partly through the water. At the top, one path kept on to the spring in the head of the gorge, and the other branched upward to the cliff and led over the shelf on its face, which in some places narrowed to a few inches, and in others broadened to a width of several feet. On this aerial pathway, almost in the centre of the cliff, where the path turned inward in a sharp curve as though for greater privacy, was a deep niche in the stone wall, set as high above the path as a man's head, which could be reached only by an effort. Nature, in a pious mood, had seemingly fashioned it for a shrine, for no man knew its origin. As if to test the worshiper's sincerity, the path here contracted perilously, and was made more hazardous by the trickle of a thready rillet from a tiny spring imprisoned in the rock.

But one person at a time could pass before this shrine, and then only with due caution, for a misstep or a slip on the wet earth meant a fall of one

hundred and fifty feet down the bare, rugged walls to the water below, and from this inward curve one could neither see nor be seen beyond it on the track. This dangerous passage was a short cut to the Greensboro road, and was in frequent use by the people thereabouts.

Lucetta left the canoe in the weeds, a little way from the mouth of the gorge, and took to the foot-path. As she entered the canyon, she began to explain her plan to Tapp, feeling now that there was no need of perfect silence between them.

"This is a dangerous place at night, in one sense, but the safest in the other," she observed.

They were well into the ravine, struggling up the dome, and black and gloomy it looked. Their nerves were at the highest tension, and the tumbling of a stone sounded like thunder to their startled ears. The old moon, forlorn and weird, made a faint showing from the parted clouds, as they struggled up the steep incline and came to the divergence of the paths.

"This is our way," said Lucetta, turning into it. "Harv Wilson's home lies half a mile farther down the creek, but they 'll hardly think of looking for us here; we 're five miles from home."

As she spoke, the shuddering cry, "O—a—k—houn!" came down the creek, and was answered faintly far up the stream.

"Great God!" cried Tapp, losing self-control for the first time. "They 're right at our heels!" looking back toward the creek.

He turned fiercely to the girl.

"Have you brought me here to trap me?"

In a passion of momentary rage, he drew out his revolver, but let the hand that held it fall to the length of his arm.

"No! I can't kill a woman, even if she is a traitor. But if you were a man," he said violently, "I'd shoot you like a dog, and throw your cursed carcass down there!"

Horrified at his ferocity, Lucetta looked at him and said in a startled voice: —

"You surely don't mean what you say? As God is my witness, I am your friend. Trust me, and I will help you out of this."

Ashamed of his brutality, and the weakness of yielding to a natural fear, he said humbly: —

"Forgive me! I trust you. Go on; I'll follow, if you lead to hell!"

"Remember," she said quietly, "it leads me into the same danger."

By this time they had reached the ledge which was the outlet to the safe road for him. They hurried along it breathlessly, with hearts beating thickly. When just under the shrine they paused to get breath, and Lucetta warned him of the danger of the path at this point. But an ominous sound reached them that chilled the sweat on their brows, and made the hair of their flesh to stand up. Fear clutched at their hearts like a great hand when they heard such noise in that lonely place. Feet were scrambling up the track they had just

left, while voices were heard in the other direction, some distance beyond the curve that hid them.

"They promised to meet us here at midnight with the white-livered hound, if they caught him," said a savage voice Tapp knew to be Wilson's.

With fierce imprecations the same voice continued: "We 'll take care of the fellow if they get him. A fall down here 'll break his cursed neck, and such an accident 's likely to happen to any one coming along here at night, 'specially a stranger."

Two or three voices joined in the laugh that followed this speech.

"So," muttered Tapp, "that 's how you 'll take care of me!"

Despairing of escape, but perfectly cool, he leaned against the wall, while Lucetta seemed stupefied for an instant.

The two parties of men were now heard advancing slowly and carefully from each way.

"It 's of no use to jump from here; it would only be a worse death," thought Tapp. "A bullet would be quicker."

He spoke the last words aloud, and the girl raised despairing eyes to his and saw, as her glance fell, the niche in the wall beside them.

"Thank God for his mercy!" she whispered. "I 'd forgot it."

She caught the desperate man's arm and pointed to the niche.

"Get up there quick!" she said in an agitated whisper, "into the niche and drag me in after."

He looked; hope quickened his senses and made him agile. Gripping the rocks till the blood nearly burst from his finger-tips, he drew himself up into the sanctuary, then fell to his knees, and dragged up the girl.

The patter of loose stones as they were displaced by on-coming feet sounded just below them. They crouched close together in the narrow refuge, waiting, spent with terror and exertion, as the men passed in Indian file below them. The first one slipped on the wet path, and swore savagely as he caught himself by clutching at the rocks in the wall.

"Look out, boys! there 's a spring here; it 's as slick as the mouth of hell!"

Each man, intent on passing safely, bent his eyes to the path, — which was faintly lighted now by the moon that shone fitfully on the other side of the creek, — and gave no thought to anything but his own peril. They met the other party at the widening of the ledge, out of sight, but in full hearing of Tapp and Lucetta, and reported their failure. With curses and threats, the whole party turned back toward Wilson's.

CHAPTER XXI

THE REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

THE governor sat late in his private office in the state-house. He was talking quietly to three gentlemen seated about the table with him. One was the adjutant-general of the state militia, General Hovey; the second, the provost-marshal for the city, Colonel Wells; and the third, Brigadier-General Carrington, in command of the district of Indiana. Their conversation was desultory and they had the appearance of awaiting some event.

Of the four men, Governor Morton's personality was the most impressive, as it was likely to be in whatsoever company. The massive nobleness of his head at once attracted notice; and his countenance expressed strong intellectuality and inflexible determination, tempered by benevolence. The forehead was high and full, across which strands of black hair fell, carelessly displaced by the restless hand now stroking the full black beard; the eyes were dark and piercing, as if potent to see far beyond the black wall of trouble and danger that encompassed him; the nose was too small to be symmetrical; and the chin unequally balanced the brow and skull.

Morton could weigh men's motives and gauge their sincerity with marvelous accuracy. In these days of peril and perplexity, caution to the point of suspicion had to be exercised in the selection of advisers, and his tact and acumen were equal to the emergency. He acknowledged the patriotism and loyalty of his political opponents by numbering them among his advisers, and trusting to them the execution of his plans. Of strong political convictions, he was no narrow partisan when the occasion demanded the help of all loyal men. Consequently he had their support and confidence to such an extent that he brought the State of Indiana through a crisis such as endangered no other. He made a needful few the repository of state secrets, but these he trusted entirely.

In his intercourse with his councilors he was the genial friend, but also the man of authority, vested in him as the governor of a great State, which he neither magnified nor disparaged.

He habitually used a low, well-modulated tone in conversation. His voice was a wonderful organ, the perfect instrument of an orator. In public speaking it was clarion-like, piercing and far-reaching. It rolled in tremendous vehemence over an audience, and held it entranced by the flow of rapid eloquence, or fell to pathetic sweetness that swept over their heart-strings like the fingers of Saul across his harp, and moved them to tears.

Splendid in invective, scathing in denunciation, courageous to recklessness in the expression of

his opinions, a master of facts, logical in argument, never truckling from expediency nor shrinking from duty, patient to long-suffering, and just, — with such qualities Morton had few peers in statecraft.

He was the greatest of that trio — Yates, Todd, and Morton — on whom fell responsibilities, during the Civil War, second only to those of the great head of the nation. Whatever feeling of ill-will was cherished then against Morton, time has left nothing but grateful remembrance of faithfulness, courage, and ability to govern wisely amid the distractions of a second chaos.

The men who were the instruments chosen to preserve us a nation were not from those living on the highest spiritual plane, but from the strong, intrepid worldlings accustomed to leading men by craft and virile power. Ardent John Brown, vehement Parson Brownlow, calm William Lloyd Garrison, elegant Wendell Phillips, even peevish Horace Greeley, took a minor part in precipitating the conflict, but in the crisis made way for men like Grant, Morton, Lincoln, — men of stronger fibre, lustier energy.

As the governor sat at the table, he glanced once or twice at the round-faced clock on the wall; turning to General Carrington, he said: —

"Is n't it time Grundy was here to report?"

"Yes, sir. He said at ten o'clock; it lacks only a minute or so of that hour."

All waited patiently for the interval to pass, and,

before it was gone, a gentle rapping was heard on the door which led into the outer office.

"Please open it, Hovey," said the governor.

Hovey unlocked the door, and the man awaited entered. It was the tin-peddler, known about Ridgely as Oliver Tapp, and to the governor and his confrères as J. J. Grundy. After salutations were exchanged, the four men drew closer to the table where the governor was seated. Tapp laid before Morton a number of papers. These he examined carefully, and compared from time to time with a memorandum he had at hand. He then passed them to his colleagues, who glanced over them. All looked serious; but if they felt depressed at the report of the agent of the secret service, they made no remark.

Selecting one of the papers, the governor said to Tapp: —

"I am afraid you are unnecessarily reckless, Mr. Grundy, but you have certainly made a thorough investigation of the affairs in Middle County, and I thank you for it."

"Of course, there is more or less risk involved in such a mission, and perhaps in some particulars I exceeded my authority, but you remember, sir, I was left to my own judgment. They were such rank Copperheads that I was determined to get into their most secret schemes. I therefore commenced at the 'Vestibule,' and went on up through the Temple, taking the three highest degrees, and I have the honor of belonging to the Grand Coun-

cil. On my last trip to Ridgely I came near not getting away," and he laughed his reckless laugh.

"How was that, Grundy?" asked Hovey.

"If it had n't been for a girl, I 'd been a cold corpse by now," and he detailed with much feeling the part Lucetta had played in the stirring affairs of the township and in his rescue.

"There are a few loyal men that can be trusted, are there not?"

"Yes, a few among the old men; the young men are in the service; and there are a few women as fearless and courageous as the men in the field."

"This Wilson," asked the governor, tapping a paper he had just been considering, "is still at the head of affairs in that county?"

"Yes; he and Coultiss, who is Grand Commander of the County Temple, but Harv 's the 'power behind the throne.'"

"They are in constant communication with Grand Commander Dodd here?"

"Yes, sir; and through him, with Supreme Commander Vallandigham at Windsor."

"You think the scheme for the uprising almost perfected?"

"Yes, sir; complete to the most trivial point. You would hardly credit them with inventing such fantastic folly; they have grips and signs, and a distinguishing cry for each degree. Down in Riffle Township, when they want to call a secret session they put up a big tin star on a tree. Yes, the time is set for the middle of August."

Governor Morton's face was not moved from its accustomed calm, but the others started in surprise.

"They have learned nothing from the events of last summer," observed Carrington.

"There is no school for fools," said the adjutant-general.

"You think their plans are all formulated, Grundy?" asked the governor.

"As well as they can be, until they meet the approval of the Supreme Commander, and you may not know that the meeting of the peace commissioners this week, at Niagara Falls, will be utilized by the Grand Council to that end."

"Their present plans may be modified at this meeting?" observed Morton inquiringly.

"Yes, unless the President remains firm in his decision as to the terms of peace."

"Would it not be well if Mr. Grundy would give us an outline of the scheme as he has learned it, Governor?" asked Wells. "He may give us fuller information than we now have."

"Perhaps it would be as well," assented the governor. "Proceed, Mr. Grundy."

"The day of the uprising was set for July 20, but they were not sufficiently organized and equipped, so Wilson informed me, and it was postponed. And that reminds me, there is an old woman down there that has a hand in this last business, — old Mrs. Bowles, as venomous a Copperhead as ever dragged on its belly; last spring I reported her to you, sir, as having received arms

under the guise of a cutting-box, and myself delivering her caps and cartridges. This time she was more discreet, and I could find little against her, but she has evidently been at her old tricks," and Tapp smiled at the recollection of the guileless Liddy Ann. "But to return to Harv: he told me every Temple in the State — and they are organized in forty-five counties — had been notified to move at a moment's notice by the middle of August. The plan in this State is to concentrate the main body in Indianapolis. The arsenal is to be seized, Camp Morton raided and rebel prisoners released. And to-morrow night, sir," turning to the governor, "at the Grand Council the Committee of Thirteen will be appointed, who will be empowered to select a Committee of Ten 'to take care of the governor.'"

Morton's face relaxed slightly, but he made no remark.

"What do they mean by that, Grundy?" asked the provost-marshal, Wells.

"Murder, in my opinion. He is to be held as a hostage for prisoners taken during the insurrection; failing that, he is to be made way with."

"Then it is n't definitely decided on whom this duty falls?"

"No, only on one of the Committee of Ten, and that by lot, so that even they will not know the person who draws it."

"It would be well to be present at that council, Grundy," observed the governor.

"I intend to, sir. And one of that Committee of Thirteen, if I can manage it."

General Carrington was not quite satisfied with the information Tapp gave on one point, and asked: —

"Did you learn the extent of the entire order as a military organization?"

"In the Grand Council of June 14 they reported they could raise an invading army of three hundred thousand. They have plenty of money; a half-million dollars was sent by their agents in Canada for arms. Indiana is divided into four military districts, each under a general, and they claim they can furnish from seventy-five to eighty thousand men. Wilson says Middle County will send nine hundred; but it won't, by half that."

"Whom do they rely on to supply the rest of this three hundred thousand?" asked the provost-marshal.

"They expect to be joined by Early from Kentucky with forty thousand, and Price from Missouri with thirty thousand; the Temples of Illinois promise fifty thousand; Ohio does n't stipulate an exact number, but has engaged to coöperate. They have depots for arms in Cincinnati and New Albany, and they are to be wagoned to the rural districts. Old Dr. Bowles asked me if I could get three thousand lances; he seemed to think them appropriate for Knights, — struck with the romance of it, I suppose, but he did not propose to rely on these altogether, for a revolver was to go with each lance."

"Was this information communicated to the various temples in writing, Mr. Grundy?" asked the governor.

"Not to my knowledge, though possibly cipher was used, but I think it was communicated to all verbally by agents."

The governor spread before him a letter he had taken from the table drawer.

"Are you familiar with cipher, Grundy?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; I can read it, not readily, however."

"Transcribe this, then." And to Tapp's amazement he put into his hand the identical letter he had seen two days before in Heffren's office in the town of Salem.

"We have more than one way of obtaining information, Mr. Grundy," was all Morton said.

Tapp took the letter, and after some time laid it before the governor, written out in full.

It ran thus: —

HEADQUARTERS 10TH DISTRICT,
GRAND MARSHAL'S OFFICE.

DEPUTY MARSHAL, — We have 40 rifles and 100 pistols for your township. It is necessary that they are placed in the hands of our brothers immediately. Inform your company that the arms will be ready on Wednesday night. Yours,

A. A. D. C.
F. W.

Governor Morton read it through deliberately, then said to Tapp: —

"Your transcription tallies exactly with the one Coffin made to-day."

Tapp looked in admiration at the man who was slowly and patiently picking up the smallest threads of the conspiracy, and winding them into a stout coil by which to throttle the conspirators.

"There is one hitch in all these plans," said Tapp.

"What is that?" inquired Wells.

"There is no reliable head. Vallandigham is a rash enthusiast; Dodd is a man of straw; Bowles is too old; and Bullet's in prison. Price and Early would lose their heads in this sort of a thing."

"What about Jeff Davis?" asked Hovey.

"Oh, he is fully informed by an agent sent to Richmond, a fellow named Dickerson. He has never had perfect confidence in the order; and if he fails them, as they now think, they will join forces with the renegades in Canada and form a new federation, and will call it the Northwestern Confederacy."

The governor smiled, and the other men received this intelligence as prompted by their temperaments. General Carrington laughed heartily at the effrontery of it; General Hovey's face flushed with anger, and he muttered invectives wrathful and profane; Wells looked incredulous. The governor alone remained unmoved; for he had unraveled so many plots and counterplots it had become as easy as unraveling Mrs. Bowles's knitting.

"There is another matter of which I would like

to speak, if you will pardon the personal nature of it," said Tapp, with evident reluctance. "You know I have visited all the disaffected districts, and I find another grievance, and that exclusively among loyal men, — extremists, I might say. They strongly criticise your selecting as advisers, and honoring with your confidence, men from the other party, 'War Democrats,' and openly complain at the trust you repose in them."

The governor listened attentively, and then said firmly: —

"You were perfectly right to tell me, Grundy. But, when I am convinced of his loyalty, I question no man's politics in such times as these." [1]

The governor mused a few moments, as if considering this new source of trouble, then, rousing, said: —

"It is growing late, gentlemen. I will detain you no longer."

Mr. Morton remained alone in the state-house an hour longer, busy at his desk. On leaving the building, he had taken but a step or two into the grounds, which were ill-lighted and full of shrubs and trees, when a shot rang out and a bullet whizzed by his head. He paused an instant and looked about for the would-be assassin, then calmly proceeded to the Bates House, where Carrington's headquarters were, and reported the matter to him.

[1] Verbatim.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MEETING OF THE GRAND COUNCIL

THE commanders of the county temples had been notified in cipher that a meeting of the greatest importance would be held in the printing-office of Grand Commander Dodd, at Indianapolis, on the evening of Tuesday, July 28, and such commanders of branch temples as might be useful in a very serious crisis were ordered to be present. The meeting was of such importance that not a hint of it must be dropped to the masses of the faithful, but kept inviolate by the chosen few.

Tapp had been duly notified of this meeting on the first day of his arrival at Ridgely, before he had gone to Mrs. Bowles's. He had met Wilson at the little wooden post-office, in the presence of the assembled loafers, who were tilted back in their chairs against the side of the building, protected from the July sun by the deep shadow it cast, and chewing tobacco as placidly as cows do their cuds. Occasionally a drowsy word was dropped as from a man talking in his sleep, while the company waited for the hack to bring the tri-weekly mail from Crofton. The ring of horseshoes sounded sharply from the rear of the smithy, where others

were playing quoits, and occasionally a somnolent loafer would rouse and drag himself off to see how the game was progressing.

In one of these slight diversions Harv said aside to Tapp: —

"I want to talk to you. Can you drive my way? You go first."

Tapp replied, "All right," and set off on the dusty street that dipped down the hill to Honey Creek. Harv followed a few moments later and overtook him at the ford, where he began abruptly:

"I had a notice from the General Secretary that all of us commanders must be in Indianapolis the 28th. Something important up, I reckon. I can't go; I've got threshing that day. But there's nothing in your way, so you'd better go. As a member of the Supreme Council of Kentucky, you'd be more than welcome. Coultiss can't go neither; he's threatened with typhoid fever."

Tapp accepted the mission, and was given the password and a line of recommendation. The next night he was hunted like vermin by the very man for whom he had agreed to stand substitute at the meeting of the Grand Council.

Harv never dreamed of Tapp having the temerity to carry out this plan of representing him; therefore he made no attempt to notify Dodd: nor could he quite believe Mrs. Bowles's suspicions in regard to him correct, although he had so far yielded to her will as to try to apprehend him. Not finding a trace of him, nor any other suspicious

fact against him, he concluded it was only old Mrs. Bowles's prejudice against Tapp as a man, such as she held, as they well knew, against them all.

The hour of ten o'clock on Tuesday night saw Tapp climbing the narrow, dirty stairs that led to the fourth floor of a dingy building on W—— street in the capital. When he reached a door profusely decorated with black thumb-marks in printer's ink, he knew he was at the appointed place.

He was admitted to an outer room by a door-keeper, with whom he entered into a short colloquy. At the committee-room door the password was demanded.

"Ba-YARD," said Tapp unhesitatingly, strongly accenting the last syllable, which was the test of membership.

When he entered this second room, — a dingy private office, which was very small, with one window overlooking the street, — he found a company of men gathered there.

The meeting was not a formal one, but had been hastily called together for consultation, owing to the serious failure of the plans of the week before. Only Dodd, the Grand Commander, and Heffren, Deputy Grand Commander, had authority to call such a meeting.

Among those present were four generals of the order, and the trusted heads of a dozen or more county temples. Middle County was not represented, as Tapp was relieved to see.

The meeting came to order, but the business proceeded informally. The men were scattered about the room, seated or standing. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke and the smell of printer's ink. Tapp took a position near the door of entrance, leaning against the wall. In front of him stood a burly man who completely hid him from view.

Dodd presided over the meeting, and Harrison acted as secretary. The names of the Grand Council were called, among them that of Harv Wilson, who was absent.

"We are called together here," said Dodd, "to decide a very serious matter. To-morrow an exposé will appear in the 'Journal.' Bullett is even now under arrest as a United States prisoner, apprehended on information of spies. There 's a traitor in the Council somewhere. The time has come for prompt action. The meeting is open to any gentleman who has anything to say pertinent to the subject under consideration."

A tall, gaunt man arose and said: —

"You know I advised getting rid of Coffin at the June meeting of the Grand Council. How any one here could have admitted him to the Council passes my understanding. I am convinced he is a United States detective. He, and the one man who, next to that monster usurper in the White House, is our greatest enemy, — Morton, — should be taken care of, put out of the way! And I would suggest that the Committee of Thirteen be empow-

ered at once to appoint a Committee of Ten for this purpose." And the gentleman subsided.

"But the trouble is, would n't that be regarded as murder by most people?" bluntly asked the burly man in front of Tapp, who seemed unprepared to go to the length of the speaker and such fanatics as Bowles, Dodd, and Milligan.

"For the good of the cause, man, tyrants and traitors must be removed!" interrupted the chairman.

"Well, you may assassinate, if you like; I 'm not of that stripe. I 'm in for fair fight."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, we must have 'union' among ourselves, if not the States, if we do effective work," said Heffren, with the Judas-like smile and suavity characteristic of him. He might easily have been a leader but for some weakness of his moral fibre that caused him to yield under great pressure. He was not strong enough to face bravely the results of his own treason, and added to cowardice the meanness of turning informer.

"I thought this organization was for the purpose of resisting the draft and stopping this war," observed Tapp, pacifically.

"So it was, young man," answered the gaunt man that had spoken before.

"But there are greater issues behind it, Dodd," he said, turning to him. "You 're fully posted; tell us exactly how affairs stand."

"Until this evening's paper came out, I thought everything was going on all right," said Dodd

ruefully. "As you know, I went to the Peace Conference at Niagara Falls and had a private conference with Clay, Holcombe, and Saunders, and we enjoyed many a laugh at the doddering marplot old Abe sent. We managed to let Clay and those fellows know a good deal, and they were in full sympathy with us. I sent a full report of our organization to the commander-in-chief of the Confederacy by them."

"How did these men personally receive the cause?"

"Very kindly, and as furthering their own. They did not offer their help, but would be glad of ours. They agreed with President Davis that, 'the war would end when their independence was recognized, and *that* they would have or extermination.'"

"Selfish devils! They care precious little for our necks!" interjected Tapp, who instantly saw he had struck a false chord and tried another move to restore harmony.

"You went from there to Chicago, Mr. Dodd?"

"Yes. The secret meetings of that convention did more effective work than the public ones. We decided, for one thing, to set a date for the general uprising of the order."

The news was received quietly by most, as if it were long anticipated, but to a few it came in the nature of a shock.

"What 's the date?" asked Tapp's portly neighbor.

"The 16th of August."

"How do you propose to accomplish it?" asked a frowzy man perched on a printer's stool, who had hitherto been silent.

"Well, we 'll have to look to the individual members of the order, especially the commanders of the temples. They must be brave and prompt. We 'll not let the country members in general know too soon, for they might back out with too much time to think about it. It 's got to be sharp work! The men must be in readiness to move at a moment's notice, and will be collected in secret camps the night before, when necessary. We will concentrate the troops here."

"You will surely have some project to mask this movement, to divert suspicion?" exclaimed Tapp, surprised at Dodd's infatuation. "You don't think the Home Guard or the Regulars will permit it without opposition?"

"Oh, I hope to influence the State Central Committee to call a mass meeting here for that date. I will notify by circulars the commanders of the Temples, who will be ordered to come, armed and ready, as fast as possible. I will take it on myself to release the prisoners at Camp Morton, who will give us substantial help. We will seize the arsenal and the person of the governor, whom we will turn over to the Committee of Ten."

"How can you do all this on your own responsibility?" asked Tapp quietly.

"By the power of my official capacity as Grand Commander of this State!"

"I was not aware it was so great," said Tapp apologetically.

"Yes; it is vested in me to lead the uprising in this State," and his eyes shone with gratified vanity.

"When I stick my head in a hornet's nest," said Tapp's neighbor, "I want to know how I'm goin' to get out without gettin' stung! Unfold your plans further, if you please, Mr. Dodd."

"Oh, we 'll have plenty of outside help. While we are at work here at Indianapolis, Captain Hines will release the prisoners at Johnson's Island. The southern districts will call their members to arms to assist Buckner, who will come in from Kentucky. Price will advance from Missouri, and Illinois and Ohio will be ready at notice. Oh, it's thoroughly planned and cannot fail!"

Tapp looked on him, astonished at his assurance. He concluded he must be crazed, or a colossal egotist, to imagine himself capable of successfully executing so Napoleonic a scheme.

"Do you for an instant think you can accomplish this, with the military sleeping on their arms, Morton fully informed, and an exposé in cold type at this moment?" he asked, amazed at his fatuity.

"It remains to be seen how much they know to expose. Probably it is not more than the disclosure of the ritual, or signs and grips. That won't amount to much. I 'll be sworn the grand object is not known."

At this moment there was a fumbling at the door, which caused some uneasiness, for several

persons showed signs of taking sudden departure. The door was opened to admit a newcomer, whom Tapp was horrified to see was Wilson. Two or three men took occasion to leave on his entrance, and Tapp slipped out with them. So well screened was he by his portly neighbor that he was not observed by Harv, who eventually took the place on the Committee of Thirteen Tapp had jocularly chosen for himself, and that very night helped name the Committee of Ten "to take care of the governor."

CHAPTER XXIII

MRS. NEAL'S GUEST

Frank Neal was duly discharged, and returned home by the middle of July. He was somewhat sobered by his experiences in the service, was more manly, and had a closer grip on his impulses; he would hardly have repeated the scene in Liberty Church now, even under provocation; but nothing could entirely change his active, lively temperament. His mother had looked forward to having her boy with her, but he himself seemed to have quite different plans. He was gone all day and every day, and never explained the nature of his occupation. There was a distinct separation at this time between neighbors differing politically. All the homely social gatherings had been abandoned; the Fourth of July barbecue had not been held. It was a time of intense political feeling, for there were three distinct parties in the field. McClellan was the ostensible candidate of the Democracy, while Lincoln had been nominated for reëlection. Hundreds of War Democrats, fearful of a change of administration at what seemed the critical point of the war, openly supported Lincoln. Campaign meetings were almost riots. Something

of sullen brooding in the political sky gave portent of a terrific storm, and, like the gathering of clouds before the impact which lets loose the thunderbolt, there was much hurrying to and fro of Harv's fuglemen, over whom Harv's control was now complete. Frank watched these men closely, and drew his own conclusions of future trouble.

He had made, as in friendliness bound, several calls at the cabin, and would have been more than pleased at the outward change in Lucetta, had he not been absorbed in other more exciting affairs. The mental change in the girl had been quite as great, but when did the mental graces of a woman ever appeal to a man with the potency of physical beauty? The desire of the eye must first be gratified; and fools are quite as satisfying, if they be pretty fools, at a certain stage of man's existence.

One day early in August, Frank came in to dinner and said, as if he were asking the most ordinary favor, and without a sign of embarrassment: —

"Mother, I wish you would ask Miss Abbot and Lucetta to spend the whole of next week here."

"'T seems to me you see enough of the girl without my doing that," said his mother, with the innate jealousy a woman feels toward one of her sex in whom her "men-folks" take too lively an interest, and which, doubtless, Eve felt for her first daughter-in-law.

"Why, mother, I've hardly seen Lucetta at all since I've been home. You know I've been too busy."

"Yes, awful busy. Too busy to tell your own mother what you're doin'." Secrets were another cause of discontent.

"Will it satisfy you, mother, if I say to you in strictest confidence that, if I were to tell you what I'm doing, I would betray a trust fit to hang me? I have my orders, and those a soldier obeys. As to Lucetta, I've quite another motive for wanting her here, which you'll find out soon enough. Though I must say Lucetta's got to be a mighty good-looking girl," he added mischievously, watching her face cloud and her lips puff out in silent disapproval.

Being fully aware of the condition of affairs in the neighborhood, Mrs. Neal was able to guess pretty accurately at Frank's motives.

"I should think it'd be mighty unpleasant for Lucetta to visit here when her pap all but murdered us in our beds," she could not refrain from saying, with a touch of resentful spite the unforgiving recipient feels toward an unloved benefactor. She could not overlook Lucetta's parentage.

"Mother, you don't really mean what you seem to. After all she did for us! Besides, Lucy's done more than a dozen men for" — And he broke off abruptly.

"If it comes to scolding your own mother for that chit, I know what'll come next. You'll be wanting to marry her, and disgrace us all."

"Marry? marry? I have n't heart to even give it thought, when the country's going to pieces, with

cutthroats and traitors plotting its ruin at our very doors," said Frank hotly. "Not that Lucy is not a good enough girl for any man," he said sturdily, an immense concession for one of his sex, and his mother recognized it, and said aggravatingly: —

"I thought so!"

Frank, exasperated, said no more but turned to leave the room, and, as he opened the door and passed over the threshold, said coldly: —

"We 'll say no more about it, mother. Sheriff Hale will take her in." And he walked off down toward the road to the creek, leaving Mrs. Neal vexed with motherly jealousy, and repentant with motherly compunction.

Mrs. Neal thought intently for some moments about their irritating difference, and then said aloud: —

"It 's nature, I reckon. But I do hope Frank — First that Swazey, then that Tapp, now — Well, I 'll go and ask her myself," which was surely as great a self-surrender as any one is capable of, be she of high or low degree. Moreover, she was a mother, — one who receives a most poignant wound when she is supplanted in the affection of her son by another woman.

Frank proceeded to the creek, where he got into his "dugout," and by his strong use of the paddle, to which irritation lent force, soon covered the half mile to the Whittaker landing.

When he reached the door, Lucetta was sitting

within the room sewing busily, and until he spoke was unconscious of his presence.

"Why, Frank, you walk as light as an Indian! I never heard you. Come in."

Frank entered, and when he was seated, asked "if the schoolmarm was at home?"

"No, she had to go to Crofton to obtain her license, and she thought she might as well visit some of her friends in town before school begins in September. She 'll be gone two weeks."

"And you 're not afraid to stay here alone? You ought to be a soldier, Lucy."

"I 'd like to be, Frank. If I were a man I would be. How men can skulk and hide and be so afraid of the draft passes me."

"That 's not the worst of it, Lucy," said Frank gravely. "If they did n't skulk and hide for such treasonable purposes, the mere matter of cowardice would n't count. The way the women have taken it up, too, is a wonder to me; there 's old Mrs. Bowles; she could have her neck stretched for what she 's already done and intends to do. It is n't a woman's business."

"That 's just where you are mistaken, Frank. You men seem to think women can't feel patriotism, or enthusiasm for a cause; that such virtues belong only to men. I never have read much, but Miss Abbot has been teaching me history; and there never has been, no, nor ever will be, a war that we women did not feel the right and wrong of it as strongly as men. We must bear it passively,

and stay at home in that suspense which often ends in slow heart-break that is worse than death in battle. Don't you know, Frank, if we could be in the thick of it, we 'd feel the fighting frenzy as keenly as you? All men don't fight well. Ours is the cruelest part in war, to receive the dead and bury them from sight; to see the danger and ruin that threatens all around, and feel that we are powerless utterly! In such times, men push women behind them, forget them or sneer at them, and the flimsy veil of courtsey is dropped entirely."

Frank was abashed for a moment at this passionate outburst, and felt that his mission as protector of the weak was a sinecure. He did not know that it was the overflow of thoughts which had occupied her at her sewing, when a woman who is at all reflective will ponder on all manner of unforbidden themes that rarely find utterance. Frank had unwittingly opened the sluice-gates, and out rushed Lucetta's broodings in a vehement flood.

But he rallied his manly vanity, and said patronizingly: —

"But you see, Lucy, they can't handle a musket or sword. Most of 'em faint at the sight of blood."

"Yes, some do. But it is a woman's work to wash away that blood and bind up those wounds, — how well, you ought to know. The loyal women of the North have helped the Union cause in this dreadful war. Why, in this very county twenty

women are running their farms, ploughing, planting, and harvesting, just like men. It is n't 'their work,' but they can do it when it must be done."

"That 's so, Lucy. If these cowardly brutes about here who won't go to the front would stand by the government half as well, — which they don't, mind you, — this war would soon be over. The rebels themselves have exhausted their resources, and their only hope is help from these valiant skulkers, the Knights of the Golden Circle. Well, the test of courage and loyalty will soon come, and that 's what I 'm here to talk to you about."

He proceeded to explain the existing conditions, and the inevitable issue, at which Lucy showed no surprise; and he finished by saying: —

"It is n't at all safe for you, or any woman, to stay here alone for at least two weeks. By then, we think, the danger will be past."

"I shall stay," said Lucetta quietly.

"But, Lucy, that is foolhardy, after all I 've told you."

"That does n't affect me personally."

"But it may, and that vitally. No, you 've got to go!" he said sternly.

She looked at him steadily and answered: —

"That is a word no one on earth has a right to use to me. I am over eighteen, and there is no one to decide my line of action but myself. I shall stay. Besides, I 'm not afraid."

"But, Lucy," he pleaded, — "I don't mean to dictate; I only had in mind your safety, — it

will be like courting danger to stay here, even with Miss Abbot; but alone — If only mother would" —

He stopped abruptly, warned by the flush which rose to Lucetta's face that she had jumped to the right conclusion, — his mother's unwillingness to have her under her roof, even in time of danger.

"Confound it all!" he said roughly, angry at his own lack of tact. "Why don't you do what I want you to? First mother, then you! It's enough to make a man hate you women, the perverse way you act! Why, God only knows, — I don't."

And he snatched his cap, and was ready to rush from the house. At the door a sight met him that made his jaw drop in ridiculous amazement.

Down the road, as far as his young eyes could see, he spied an old horse jogging along easily, and on its back a woman.

"I 'll be shot if it ain't mother!"

And he subsided into a chair with a resigned air that told plainly his inability to comprehend the sex.

Lucetta turned her eyes toward the same object, and, for some perplexing reason, began to cry.

"Good Lord, Lucy! what 're you crying about now? You never shed a tear, I 'll be bound, that night you warned the sheriff."

"You are so rough, Frank! and besides you just as good as told me your mother would n't have me in the house."

"Why, I did n't do any such thing! Here she comes now, to invite you herself, I 'll bet a ten-dollar greenback."

Lucetta looked down the road, and, as the rather stern face of Mrs. Neal came well into view, her own hardened, and she said coldly: —

"She is coming to say that I need n't expect anything of the kind. I 'll go to the sheriff's first, anyway, if I have to go."

Frank could n't believe his ears. This gentle, quiet girl, now so defiant, whom he had thought almost spiritless, he had formerly passed by for the "jolly" girls because they had more "go." None of these would have stood out so resolutely. He twirled his cap in perplexity. He began to feel as if caught between two opposing skirmish lines, and, expecting a lively engagement if Lucetta and his mother came together, he meditated retreat.

"You don't know anything about it," he said, in reply to the first part of her last speech. "But, if she asks you, promise me you 'll go."

He was so urgent, she looked into his eager face and his clear blue eyes, which pleaded earnestly with her, but expressed nothing more than anxiety for her welfare.

"Believe me, it is for your safety I ask it. Will you promise?"

"Yes, if she asks me," was the reluctant answer Lucetta gave, compelled in spite of herself.

"But, Lucy," demanded the boy, "why could n't

you have said so in the first place and saved all this fuss? I never was so nearly mad at you," and he laughed blithely.

"I don't know why, Frank," replied the girl simply.

By this time Mrs. Neal had reached the big gate, and Frank hastened out to help her dismount.

"I 've sounded her, mother, and I don't think she wants to come," he said craftily. "I wish she would, to keep you company. I 'll have to be away most of the week."

Now Mrs. Neal was a woman who, while not a hectoring one, liked to have her favors gratefully accepted when she took the trouble to offer them, which usually she was more than willing to do. But in this case something undefinable held her back; she felt a reluctance she could not account for, or rather would not. She had long since forgiven the injury done to them by Lucetta's father. It was wiped out by the good works of the daughter and the death of the parent, but there had been little or no intercourse between them since that calamity, now a year past.

She dismounted and was soon in the house, and Frank walked down the little footpath toward the creek, whistling cheerfully.

"What's this Frank tells me?" were Mrs. Neal's first words. "He says it's dangerous, and you goin' to stay here," as if her son were an oracle whose words could not be disputed. "I 'd like the best in the world to have you next week. It 'll be

lonesome-like, with Abner away threshin' about the neighborhood, and Frank gone, too. We 'll have threshers, too, a Friday."

Both drew a little sigh of relief, characteristic of women when an expected unpleasantness passes by harmlessly.

They looked into each other's eyes, — the one with anxious questioning, the other with timid appeal. They understood, if Frank did not.

"If you want me, and I can help, I 'll go," said Lucetta at last, gently.

"Might as well go now," urged Mrs. Neal, — "while the horse is here. Old Vick carries double."

Relieved at the way the affair had ended, Lucetta quickly made her small preparations, packing a change of clothing into a little carpet-bag, the design upon which seemed made of one big red flower. She covered the coals, made fast the door, and was ready. Soon they were ambling back to Neal's, and Frank, catching sight of them as they rode through the iron-weed standing thick in the sandy creek-bottom, gave an exclamation of surprise and said aloud: —

"Well, mother's a good one! It didn't take her long to make the girl do what she wanted. And Lucy, — well, Lucy 's a nice girl."

And he looked after them as they mounted the gentle swell to the house.

The next week was the pleasantest Lucetta had ever passed. The Neals were what is called in

the neighborhood "well off" and "good livers," and the visit was a welcome change. She was so ready and helpful that, before three days had passed, Mrs. Neal began to wonder what she should do without her when she went home, and why she had not missed her own girls when they married and left her, one to live in Indianapolis, and the other in the adjoining county. She did not take into consideration that her strength had flagged with advancing age in the decade during which her girls had been established in their own homes. Now Lucetta, whose nineteen years had been passed in service for others, fell naturally back into her former habit, and gave the old people a daughter's ministration. Frank was away all day, and frequently till late at night. But on the few evenings spent at home, when they sat on the porch talking, a completeness in the family circle made itself felt. Frank was running over with liveliness; the others were cheerful. He told them stories of the bright side of camp life, and the only thing that stopped his flow of talk was when they asked about his prison life. Of that he could never speak freely.

Lucetta was not a girl of superabundant spirits, and, at that time, life for her was too serious; but now and then Frank could surprise from her a girlish peal that mingled pleasantly with his father's hearty laugh and his mother's shriller one.

Once, when they parted for the night, the young people climbed the stairs together, Frank still laughing and talking.

The old husband turned to the old wife, and, jerking his head in their direction, said: —

"Frank might do worse."

"He ain't thinking of that," said Mrs. Neal petulantly. "He don't think nor dream of anything but war and soldierin'."

"That 's all right now, but he will after a while. He will after a while."

"Why, Abner Neal! have you forgot" —

"Yes, I have, wife. And so 'll Frank, I reckon," said the old man sturdily.

CHAPTER XXIV

A PRISONER OF WAR

On the morning of the 15th of August, Ridgely lay as stagnant as a mill-pond under the subdued rays of the rising sun. A hush seemed to brood over all the processes of nature; the birds were silent; the waters of Honey Creek were low from the midsummer drought, and flowed sluggishly in their bed; cattle cropped listlessly; and the people moved about as noiselessly as if on tiptoe with expectancy. A feeling of suspense was in the air, diffused as ethereally as the odor of flowers at the dew-fall.

At the doors of many of the scattered cabins and small wooden houses in the country and on the outskirts of the village hung what, at first glance, seemed a white cornucopia, such as idle schoolboys make of the leaves of their copy-books. A vagrant wind set them a-flutter, then straightened them out with a smart crack to pass on and let them fall limp again. But that brief trick of a passing breeze displayed a tiny flag made of white cloth, with a red ribbon running along the top and carried down the sides, and hanging below like streamers.

Frank Neal was abroad early, on horseback and on his way to Ridgely post-office, where he expected important letters.

At first sight of these mysterious rags he was startled and felt a twinge of fear; the next moment it was changed to fury that found vent in bitter imprecations, and instead of keeping on to Ridgely he turned back, and rode at an easy trot till out of sight of the village, when his pace was changed to a furious gallop. On he rode till he reached the county-seat and reported to Sheriff Hale. He then went to the telegraph office and sent a message to the governor.

Shortly after noon that same day, the Crofton idlers seated on the court-house fence in the shade of the old locust-trees, some engaged in talking over the prospect of Lincoln's reëlection, others lounging in chairs tilted back against the squatty brick "Treasurer's Office," were attracted by a curious measured sound, which grew louder momently until it resolved into a steady tramp, tramp. Then came the clatter of arms and jangle of canteens, the flash of bayonets carried at "rest;" then a cloud of dust, and a company of soldiers passed down Main Street and turned the corner out of sight before they had recovered from their surprise at the apparition.

A quick command to halt was given at the town pump; an order to break ranks and fill canteens; and, in as few seconds as it took to execute the order, a crowd had collected about them, and they

were plied with questions as to why they were there, and where they were going, questions they either could not or would not answer.

"Them blamed Butternuts down in Honey Creek Township is up, I reckon!" said one citizen, spitting out his tobacco in order to express himself more freely. "Some of Harv Wilson's devilment, I bet!"

The soldiers bandied jests by way of reply. After the young lieutenant in command had held a short conference with Sheriff Hale, the order to "fall in" was given, and the company formed in line of march and set off, followed by several farm wagons, whose owners had volunteered to transport them to their goal. They were also accompanied by old Jason Cory with his cannon, — the pride of every boy in Crofton, — which hitherto had had no more warlike duty than to fire a salute on the Fourth of July or Washington's Birthday. But the old gunner was a loyal man, and eagerly lent his service and that of his ancient gun, which he loved as if it were alive. Frank Neal piloted them, and almost before the people of Crofton had recovered from their surprise the company was gone. The men kept in ranks till well out of town, then at the command of their officer marched in irregular order over the dusty roads, or availed themselves of the jolting wagons. The march was leisurely, as they wished to reach Ridgely under cover of dusk, and encamp before the enemy knew of their presence on the field. They had no tents, but set

out, like seasoned veterans as they were, in light marching order, each man with a blanket on his back in which to roll himself as he couched on the ground.

Frank conducted them to a retired spot by the secluded road that skirted the creek back of his home. Ridgely was not visible from that point, and here the troops would remain till they could come up with the enemy under cover of darkness. When Frank, who rode ahead as a scout, came in view of their own landing, he saw the canoe shoot swiftly out from the shore and down-stream as fast as the sturdy strokes of a girl could paddle it. The gay young soldiers made bets on her progress, or remarks of admiration on her supple grace. Frank wheeled and rode back to the young officer, with whom he exchanged a few words. The company halted, and he dashed ahead as fast as his jaded animal could go. His object was to intercept the girl at the landing nearest the village; and he was there, and had fastened his horse to a scrub sycamore out of her sight, before she could tie up the canoe, which she ran into a sheltered place in the willows, as if to hide it. Her cheeks flamed with two red spots; her fingers trembled so she could hardly use them; she looked anxious and agitated.

Frank stepped out before her as she mounted the narrow river-path to the village, now in sight from the high bank, and spoke to her before she realized his presence.

"Where are you going, Lucy? I thought you were to stay with mother."

She started guiltily, but words would not at once rise to her lips.

"Have you turned traitor, too?" said Frank bitterly. "By Heaven! I 'd drown you in the creek if I thought so!"

"No, no!" she cried breathlessly.

"You were going to that Copperhead camp to warn them?"

"Oh, Frank, it was only that I might prevent bloodshed. I thought I might get them to go home if they knew the soldiers were actually here. I tried to persuade them to, early this morning, but they would n't listen to me. I saw you gallop off, Frank, and I guessed that what I feared — the uprising — had come."

"Then you knew what I 'd gone for, and would have betrayed me, too?"

"I did not think of betraying you, Frank. I only thought of the murder that would be done, when Tim Cull came in and told us Harv Wilson had a hundred and fifty men camped in the meadow back of Bolser's. Then I knew you 'd gone for the soldiers."

"And you would save them at the expense of my life?"

"No, no!"

"By violating the honor of your State, then?"

"The honor of my State is as dear to me as to you, or to our governor himself. But don't you

understand? How could I let these poor fools, duped and led into this by Harv Wilson and such men, be killed by the soldiers, or, worse, arrested and hanged as traitors for this insurrection? They are my neighbors, and were my father's and mother's friends. I have known them all my life. What do they know of the principles involved in this war? I didn't know myself till Miss Abbot told me. They are as ignorant as children, and as impulsive. Their prejudices are worked on by the leaders, who as you know are bad or fanatical men," pleaded Lucetta.

"They know enough to be rank traitors, and are eager to ruin our cause and break up the Union. If they are dupes, and I admit most of Wilson's followers are, they need a little sense put into them, and a bullet is as good a means of doing it as anything I know. The cursed hounds! Infernal Copperheads! Have I any reason to spare them? Your friends would have burned us all in our beds, and for what? Because we were loyal! They would have shot me because I wore the blue uniform!" he urged passionately. And you 'll *not* warn them, Miss!" — with a sudden descent from the grandiose, — "and you 'll just turn round and go home!" said Frank, with that irritating air of command which men at their wits' end assume toward women; and he untied his horse and led it into the path where he and Lucetta had stood talking. To his intense vexation, she continued down the path in spite of his re-

monstrance, his command, he following until they came into the road, fenced on the meadow side by a "stake-and-rider."

Across the hilly field he could see smoke from the dying camp-fires rising in the calm, moist air. It was now twilight, and the insurgent camp lay in profound quiet, snugly hidden, and betrayed only by the trail of blue vapor. By climbing the rail fence it could be reached by a short cut. Frank urged Lucetta no farther, but led his horse close to the fence, and stepping on a lower rail said shortly:

"Climb up here and I'll point out the camp of your precious friends, if you must go to them, house-burners, assassins, cutthroats as they are!"

"Frank, I feel it my sacred duty to warn them."

She looked firmly into his eyes, shining with anger. Both were determined and actuated by their ideas of duty and honor; a man's will pitted against a woman's; neither willing to yield. He sat on the top rail, with one leg thrown across the fence, looking down at her expectantly. An insidious smile broke the gravity of his young face for an instant, which as swiftly grew stern. Her mood was one of calm exaltation, which exasperates a man when opposed to his own, and utterly routs all his powers of persuasion.

"Well," said Frank shortly, "give me your hand; now step up. Wait till I get on the top rail." He stood up where the rails crossed, and reached down his hand to her. His horse stood with drooping head close by.

Lucetta, embarrassed by his help offered in an act she had performed alone all her life, did as she was told.

With a sharp jerk he brought the horse alongside, flung himself into the saddle, and, before she had time to realize his intent, clasped Lucetta, who was on the top of the fence, in both arms, lifted her to a place before him on the saddle, and holding her fast, said exultantly: —

"You 're a prisoner of war! All 's fair in love and war, Lucy, and there 's a little of both in this!"

With a shake of the bridle he was off, and when they reached the house he coolly locked her in a room up-stairs which had but one window, and that one from which it would be dangerous to jump. He knew too well Lucetta's firmness when the idea of duty possessed her, and he had no other resource but to make her a veritable prisoner. He passed through the kitchen to find his mother and inform her of his capture, but she was busy with the milk at the spring-house and he failed to see her. He returned to the soldiers, and, in the excitement of pitching camp, entirely forgot his irritation, Lucetta, everything, indeed, but the present occupation.

CHAPTER XXV

THE UPRISING

With much shrewdness, Harv Wilson had selected the position for his camp. His sole purpose had been to keep out of sight; but he had not taken into consideration, as a trained soldier would have done, its possibilities of successful defense in case of surprise from an enemy.

He had chosen a horseshoe-shaped dell, about fifty yards across, covered with a fine thick turf of blue grass eaten short by the cattle. It was surrounded by hills, which rose in a gentle ascent to the right and left, but almost like an escarpment in the rear, where its green walls reached the greatest height. One standing at that point could look down on the camp and see its every movement. The opening of the horseshoe was quite narrow and was the outlet to the road. Within its confines were encamped about one hundred and fifty men, for the most part farmers and laborers, closely crowded between the green walls. Just what was expected of them, none knew intelligibly except the leaders, whose knowledge was not too clear.

The exposé had not proved serious, as Dodd had

predicted; it had not penetrated to the innermost secrets, nor laid bare the purposes of the organization; so that the original intention of an uprising for August 16th was not abandoned.

The Knights of Riffle and Honey Creek townships had gone into camp, as ordered by the Grand Council, and were waiting to be joined by Price from the West and by Buckner from the South; and they were in constant expectation of a courier to inform them of the advance of one or both of these forces, or of orders to march to the capital independently of these, and fall in with other Knights whom they might overtake. They had reached a state of such fanaticism that they entertained no doubt of success.

As the sun sank behind the hills across Honey Creek, it was a picturesque sight to see their blazing camp-fires; for the August nights were chilly and the mists from the creek cold. The white walls of several large tents were fitfully displayed in the flickering light. The floors of these tents were thickly overlaid with fresh straw, and each man found for himself a bed in any one he fancied, or lay under the wagons that had transported the camp fittings. Those who disliked the too close quarters of the tents rolled themselves in a blanket and lay on the ground. Worn out with unusual excitement, the men soon sought their beds.

Harv Wilson had grown more and more anxious as the evening advanced and no courier had ar-

rived. He called about him two or three men, who were his inferior officers, and said: —

"I don't know what to make of this. I was ordered by Dodd to be ready to move at sundown. He said he'd send Captain Athon to lead us where he wanted us."

"Somethin' seems wrong," observed the first lieutenant, who flourished a corn-knife for a sword.

"'Pears like," observed the second lieutenant. "What ye goin' to do, Harv?"

Harv, who was now captain, frowned at this breach of discipline and said: "Go to bed! I'm goin' to."

"What! without sentries?" exclaimed the first lieutenant, who had been in the army and dishonorably discharged.

"See to postin' 'em yourself!" said Harv angrily. "I'm goin' to bed."

As the camp settled into repose, the low murmur of voices fell into silence, and gave place to the loud insistent fiddling of amorous katydids, and the shrilling of crickets. Occasionally the bark of a restless dog was heard. Over them hung a black-blue sky, into which they gazed as from a well at a circle of star-studded space. About midnight the waning moon rose above the highest hill enclosing the camp. The movement of sentries could be heard, but later they too fell asleep, unused to watching, and worn out by unwonted excitement.

Up the side of the hill to the northeast three men crept cautiously. They climbed it obliquely

to the highest point that hung above the encampment. This reached, they threw themselves prone on the ground, peering into the stronghold of the enemy.

They were Frank Neal, a young corporal, and the young lieutenant in command.

Frank rapidly and accurately explained the position, and the lieutenant laid his plans accordingly. They then returned to their own bivouac, half a mile away, as secretly as they had come.

At four o'clock the mist from Honey Creek filled the valley; like a moist veil, it fell over hills and woods, leaving nothing clearly visible. The cocks were crowing shrilly and jays were screaming, but these were the only signs of dawn. Yet in the encampment on the by-road there were quiet movements of some kind. A small squad of men defiled to the right, and disappeared in the mist as silently as ghosts. Another followed in a few moments, and was swallowed up in the same mysterious way. A third moved to a position in front of the horseshoe behind which lay Harv's slumbering followers, and formed in line across the opening.

All these movements were completed before the first sun-rays streaked the sky. The sun rose a little after five, but the heavy mists delayed the dawning, which deepened into gray light slowly.

A sound of furious galloping bestirred the slumbering camp, for the sensitive mist-charged atmosphere carried sound into the little dell with loud reverberance.

The young lieutenant had placed two sentinels two hundred yards down the road, behind the great white trunks of some sycamores, which hid them from the camp, but gave them full view of the road. One of these was Frank Neal. As the sound of the galloping drew nearer, the men looked to their arms, and, as a jaded horse came in sight at a forced gallop from which speed was spent, they sprang from their places, threw the horse on his haunches, and forced him to halt. Before the amazed rider could realize his situation, a gun was thrust in his face through the mist, a challenge given, and strong hands dragged him to the ground.

"Vallandigham," the horseman answered, unhesitatingly.

"I guess you 're the fellow we want, if you don't give the right password! I 've orders to search him, corporal," said Frank to the other soldier.

He rapidly examined the courier, and found a slip of paper, which there had been no attempt to conceal. On it was a single sentence: —

"Look out for a drove of mules."

"Ah, cipher!" said Frank. "My young man, we 'll call on you to read the riddle."

"I refuse!" said the bearer sturdily.

"I guess you 'd better think over your refusal," said Frank, placing a revolver to the fellow's head. "I 'll give you two minutes!"

The courier was not a soldier, and gasped out in horrified astonishment: —

"Why, you would n't shoot a feller, would you?"

"That's orders!" said Frank grimly. "This is war! War of your own making, too! So talk up briskly, my man."

"It was from Colonel Heffren, of the 3d, to warn Harv Wilson Abe Lincoln's soldiers were comin.'"

"Oh, they're the 'mules,' are they?" said Frank. The fellow grinned and nodded an assent.

The horse, freed, slackened its pace to a weary walk, and, by the time Frank had made his capture, it had crept between the lines into the camp of the insurgents, from whence it had caught the neigh of one of its kind and feebly answered. This startled the camp like a loud alarm.

As if by preconcerted signal, the men sprang from their tents, formed into confused groups, ready for they knew not what, just as the sun shot up over the hill, lifting the baffling cloud of mist.

Before their astonished eyes, at the mouth of the dell, was planted a cannon, and, as it seemed to their startled senses, there stretched endlessly a line of blue-clad soldiers, with guns at "ready," standing still as if carved in stone. They turned mechanically to climb the less steep hills, to find there also a line of soldiers, with bayonets fixed, thrown round the dell. So skillfully had the troop been placed that it commanded every point of escape, as Harv Wilson was quick to comprehend.

He had no means of finding out their numbers. He was no coward, but was shrewder than his fol-

lowers, and he advised them to lay down their arms and make peaceable surrender.

This counsel had a curious effect, for it roused most of them to frenzy, and they rushed toward the line of soldiery, armed with corn-knives, pitch-forks, billets of wood, anything they could catch up. Those who had guns shot recklessly, and for a few moments the wildest commotion ensued. A quick volley from the troops, fired over their heads, had a calming effect. Seizing the opportunity, Wilson went among them, cursing the mutinous, encouraging the timid, until by degrees he brought them under his control and made them understand the uselessness of resisting trained soldiers.

"We 'll have help inside of an hour from Price or Buckner. Just keep cool, and let 'em think we 're beat," Harv exhorted. "That horse is Billy Hines's, and he was to bring the word as soon as they had crossed the state line."

This encouraged those who were in a mood to be reasoned with, and they stood in sullen groups, not yet fully able to grasp the situation.

In the midst of it all, Frank Neal came into camp, and, going up to Wilson, said, so that all might hear : —

"Harv, I 've a communication for you," and he passed over a dirty scrap of paper.

Harv read it, and his bloated face turned pale, as a visionary noose dangled before his eyes. But there was a heroic strain in him, and he bore it well and stanchly.

"It's all up with us, boys!" he said to his followers. Then he turned to Frank and asked: —

"Who 's your commanding officer?"

"Lieutenant B——"

"He 's played it smart. Tell him I surrender. But, Frank, use your influence with him to let these fools go home. Don't half of them know what they 're here for."

"I don't know what Lieutenant B——'s orders are on that point, but I 'll carry your message to him."

Frank scaled the steep hill opposite the point where the cannon was planted, and found the young officer standing there, watching the scene below. He was laughing softly as Frank came to his side.

"It seems to be a bloodless victory, Neal," he observed.

"Yes," assented Frank. "But they would not have yielded so easily but for this." And he handed him the bit of paper that had so affected Harv Wilson.

The officer read it and remarked, "Well?" questioningly.

"The fools were really in earnest," exclaimed B——. "I knew there was devilment of some sort afoot. We are sent out every week or so to suppress local troubles. But, by Heaven, I did n't think it would reach insurrection in such an out-of-the-way place as this!"

The lieutenant descended the hill and took for-

mal possession of the camp. Acting on orders from headquarters in such cases, he dismissed the rank and file to their homes, frightened and crestfallen, with an indeterminate sentence hanging over them. Harv would be held as a prisoner of war, carried back to Crofton, and placed in the jail there, to be held till wanted by the authorities. Athon and Miller, his lieutenants, had a like sentence.

In the midst of breaking camp a diversion was made. In some inscrutable way the news had flown far and wide that the soldiers had come, and on the road a crowd of tearful women, and frightened children, and a few silent men had gathered. Suddenly these made way for some one. It was old Mrs. Bowles, roughly crowding the women and trampling the children in her haste to reach the camp. She passed the sentinels in contempt, in spite of bayonets presented, to which she gave no more heed than so many hickory goads.

She marched straight up to Harv, who was a prisoner under guard, violently shook her fist in his face, and raged like a lioness.

"We might 'a' known we could n't trust you, Harv Wilson. You never had no sand in your craw. You make a big splashin' in shallow water. All you 're fittin' fer is to bully men like Whittaker, and rob widders a-lawin'. You deserve the gallows, and thank God you 'll git your wages. You never was true to the cause, an' I spit on you!"

She violently did so, before two soldiers could lay hands on her to lead her out of the lines, jerking and raging.

The young officer had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and had watched this scene with amused astonishment, till he recovered sufficiently to have her removed.

"It seems the women *would* fight!" he remarked with emphasis that caused Wilson to shoot an envenomed glance at him.

After a hasty breakfast the troops set out for Crofton with their three prisoners, who were turned over to Sheriff Hale, and the great uprising in Middle County ended without a drop of blood being shed.

CHAPTER XXVI

CAPTIVE AND CAPTOR

It was with a feeling of utter humiliation that Lucetta saw the door closed and locked, and Frank depart without a word of excuse or regret. She heard him run noisily down the stairs, slam a door; then silence. The next few hours she passed in abasement so great she hardly moved a muscle or uttered a sound. The thought of the indignity to which she had been subjected kept running through her mind faster than the water in Honey Creek, whose fretting she could distinctly hear as it crossed the riffle at the ford.

As the hours passed on and the house grew quieter and no one came to her rescue, she realized with intenser shame, if possible, that Frank had forgotten her. She had no means of knowing he was in camp with the soldiers.

Lucetta's dealings with men had given her little knowledge of them that would apply to one like Frank, who, compared to the dwellers in this out-of-the-way place, had seen life, busy, active, stirring life. Her father was the least virile of his sex, although springing from sturdy Scottish stock; and she may have dimly realized this lack of manly

vigor, though a merciful Providence never permits a daughter the unsparing view of strangers in such cases. A large charity covered all Zeb's shortcomings, and only a remembrance of his unfailing gentleness and natural courtesy remained; this had been cherished and idealized in his daughter's memory. Strangely enough, his weakness had no effect in shaping her belief of what a man should be.

If it were possible for men to catch a spiritual glimpse of those ideals of maidenhood which girls create and endow from their own pure hearts, how warped and ignoble the real would seem! Nothing human could fill them. They rise to the stature of gods, whose devotees are so engaged in looking up that their glance rarely falls upon the feet of clay. Lucetta had unconsciously endowed Frank with heroship.

She could not sleep, but after hours of endurance her torturing mood of abasement passed like a paroxysm of pain. She felt a softer one take its place in her heart and wondered at it, and, with self-questioning peculiar to lonely women, analyzed it with painful accuracy. She realized that she was not as angry with Frank as she should have been, and a new fear and shame tormented her; she cherished no delusions concerning his regard for her, but she had fostered others, unwittingly, in regard to herself.

Lonely, unsought, set apart for service from childhood like a Vestal, no man had felt for her the delicate tenderness, the special affection her

fastidious nature demanded, which, if she could not attain, she was strong enough to forego. The coarse advances of a man like Swazey disgusted and terrified her. She realized with an abashing clearness that she coveted Frank's regard; she even confessed to herself, in that dreary vigil, a longing to inspire in him a feeling finer than a mere boy-and-girl fondness, which on her part was a fondness that had sprung to the full stature of love. In the flash of revelation she saw it, and shut it in, for she could not thrust it out of her pure, unselfish, longing heart. This night's rough treatment plainly proved that Frank had no tender feeling for her. His mind and soul were filled with ambition and the lust of fighting, and he longed for success in war, not love. She experienced a woman's resentful jealousy at being overlooked and neglected, while she chid herself for harboring the unlawful thought.

Frank's nature was as open as the day; he possessed quick sympathy, easy forgetfulness of annoyance, a rollicking gallantry that induced him to make laughing love to every pretty girl he met. The soldier's assurance made him confident of their admiration, and not many disappointed him. Yet there was a strong side to his character not often roused, — the heritage of a high sense of duty, and that puritanical conscience which occasionally called for self-abasement.

The development of the sentimental side of his character had been arrested by the hard realities

of war and the absorbing demands of military ambition. If he had ever thought of Lucetta, it was with gratitude for her timely help, and to pity her, superficially, for having such a worthless father and sickly mother, — and, now that Providence had removed them, there was no longer reason even for this compassion; sympathy for her loneliness was now his strongest feeling. As a schoolboy, he had defended her against the roughness of other lads; but he had been unequal to the task of protecting her from the sly flings of the girls, of which, indeed, he was ignorant, and at which he would probably have laughed with the callousness of a boy unsuspecting a girl's sensitiveness. But Frank was one of Nature's lance-breakers, and the object was always a secondary matter.

In the shriving Lucetta gave her heart that night, she did not overlook one bitter fact. When Frank was rough, and had forcibly prevented her carrying out her intention, and disdained her idea of duty, she was angry because *he* did it; in another, she would have passed it by without resentment or resistance. When he had laughingly called her strong-minded, as she timorously unfolded her plans for self-improvement to him alone, she was wounded that he was not more sympathetic. He regaled her with the pranks that had engaged him at college, and she had thought him lacking in love of knowledge, and was disappointed in him. But when he related enthusiastically his war experiences, showing greater desire to defeat

the enemy than devotion to the principles involved in the war, she was shocked, and the escapades in camp and on the march sounded coarse, even brutal; but she put it all out of her mind. She condoned the fault because of the sinner. She had not realized that her imaginary hero had taken on mortal form until the harrowing fact was revealed in the long hours of her imprisonment, and the shame of the consciousness of unsought love was hers. Self-contempt and stern resolution would not banish from her mind the face that had looked at her as he thrust her inside the door with rough haste. Cheeks flushed with excitement, eyes shining with satisfaction, his lips smiling with exultation at his success in frustrating her design, — that was all she saw. The crowning insult was the only good-by he had given her: —

"You 'll not meddle with what don't concern you, in here."

As the hours of her imprisonment grew longer, her pride, — heaven's most precious gift to woman to sustain her against the hurt of the indifference or cruelty of man, — till then latent, came to her help. Instinct taught her on the instant that a show of preference from her would be received by him with contempt, dislike, even hate.

Tired out, she slept fitfully for an hour or so. At dawn she heard the quick volley from the camp, and the confused sounds that followed, and every other emotion was swallowed up in fear for Frank's safety.

As the day advanced to evening again and she was not released, her feelings underwent another change. She resented the neglect that kept her a prisoner twenty-four hours without food or drink. The house was large; the little room was remote from the living-room, and seldom used except when they had company. She was certain Mrs. Neal knew nothing of her presence under her roof, for she had told her that she would stay the night with Mrs. Rush.

Resentful stubbornness dislodged every tender emotion, and she resolved to remain there, without making outcry or appeal for release, till Frank himself remembered her, though she starved; and very real pangs of hunger reminded her how painful such a fate would be.

At six o'clock Frank came home, tired and triumphant, and, as he wiped his face on the long roller towel in the kitchen, he vivaciously recounted to his father and mother the outcome of the famous battle.

His mother said at the conclusion: —

"I hope Lucetty ain't scared to death! She went to see Mrs. Rush yesterday evening after supper, and told me she did n't know when she 'd come back."

"Lucetta — Lucetta!" stammered Frank. "Good Lord! I 'd forgotten all about her!" And he dashed out of the room, fumbling for the key in his pocket, not heeding his mother's cry, —

"Why, is the boy crazy?"

He rushed up the stairway to the little room, turned the key in the lock, but on trying the door found he could not get in. It was fastened on the inside, and he remembered how he had put the old-fashioned bolt on the door because his sister Sally had been afraid of burglars when she came home on a visit.

"Lucy! Lucy!" he called. There was no answer.

"She could n't have jumped out of the window. It would have broken her neck or crippled her," he meditated. Then he shook the door vigorously, but to no purpose.

"Open the door! Don't be such a fool!" he called, exasperated.

Silence. All he heard was his mother calling to know what he meant.

He waited a little longer, then said aloud, apprehensively: —

"She could n't have died of fright. Girls are such cowards!"

A recollection of Lucetta's deeds of courage flashed through his mind and disproved this opinion.

"This one is n't," he mused, "but they are all stubborn!" recalling contests of will with his sisters.

"Lucy," he said, with sweet persuasion, "please open the door; I 'm sorry I forgot you." No reply.

"Damn it all! I 'll break down this door if you

don't open it!" And a series of vigorous kicks gave proof of the sincerity of his threat. The gallant soldier had turned bully. He heard the bolt click, and he expected a different sight from the one that met him. He knew girls cried. "Sniveled" he called it. But this one did not. She was exceedingly pale, but perfectly composed, and her eyes rested on his coldly. With compressed lips she passed him, and started for the stairway in unbroken silence.

Her cold glance made him feel as if a sabre had slashed him, and he involuntarily winced from the imaginary wound. His nature was demonstrative and must find outlet in words, which were wont to overflow from his lips as easily as the spring branch over its banks in a freshet.

"Lucy, I 'm sorry you 've been shut up twenty-four hours. Why did n't you call mother? She would have given you something to eat over the transom." Amused at the idea, he laughed.

Lucy passed down the hall, but he intercepted her.

"You don't mean that you are really mad at me?" he asked, his Irish blue eyes looking as sad and appealing as they had been merry and amused the moment before.

The sealed lips did not unclose, nor the cold eyes change.

"Won't you speak to me, Lucy?" he pleaded in that winning way that had melted many a girl before.

"Yes, this once. Then I 'll never speak to you again! You ridiculed my ideas of duty; you impeached my loyalty; you believed me a traitor, for you said so; you insulted my womanhood" —

Frank tried to interrupt her, but she would not be stopped.

"No, don't try to make idle excuses! Like other men, you cheapen a woman's patriotism; you regard her idea of duty as a whim; her love of country as child's prattle, to be listened to with indulgence and checked when grown tiresome. You have no real respect for me, and treated me with violence almost ruffianly! After all this, you expect me to act as though you had done nothing! No, I 'll not have anything to do with you nor your people. Your mother hates me; and yesterday your father said, 'Thank God, my girl, you 're not like your father!' He despises me! But you — you do all that, and more!"

She ran down the stairs, leaving Frank in greater disorder than if he had met the enemy and had been worsted. Before he recovered she had left the house.

When he crept crestfallen into the kitchen, it was to find his father chuckling at his defeat, and his mother dazed and frightened, looking after the girl resentfully.

Frank then explained, whereupon old Abner said: —

"No wonder the girl 's mad! But, 'pears to me, she licked you worse 'n you did the Butternuts!"

"It 'pears to me," said Mrs. Neal tartly, "she 's an ungrateful hussy!"

"That 's the last word that should be applied to Lucy, mother!" Frank said warmly, and he took his way to the barn with his hands in his pockets, whistling softly between his teeth, to think it over. And his mother exclaimed, "Did you ever!"

This outburst of Lucetta's surprised Frank and made him feel uncomfortable, but it created in him the respect she had found wanting, and he recognized with a boy's slow perception that perhaps a girl might be brave; might have earnest convictions; and that her compassion for the ignorant dupes of Harv Wilson was, after all, praiseworthy. With his characteristic impulsiveness, he wanted to tell her so, and resolved to do it the next day.

But in that he was disappointed, for the latchstring of the cabin was not out, nor could he find it so on the days that followed.

CHAPTER XXVII

CAPITULATION

During the fortnight after the "battle," as it was thereafter called in that vicinity, Frank's time was taken up with the necessary legal proceedings against the insurgents. Notwithstanding his preoccupation, he had tried many times to make his peace with Lucetta, but in vain. He had even written to her imploring recognition, at least; for she had passed him in the road as she would have done a total stranger. He sent the note by Zeke, the bound boy, but it had been returned intact. Opposition of this kind acts differently on men of dissimilar temperaments. It rouses the pertinacity of some, kills the interest of others. In Frank it had the first effect; but, to his infinite amazement, he had found one woman who was not amenable to his wishes. For a youth of his age, Frank had had no small share of flirtation, "sparking" they called it in the vernacular. It dated back to the time of his first fine Sunday suit presented on his sixteenth birthday. It was such gay, honest, open trifling that he had won the reputation of "meanin' nothing," and the neighborhood belles repaid him in kind. After entering college his manner toward

them turned to friendliness, for he could no longer enter into their rough fun with his former zest, and when he enlisted in the army his interest in them dwindled to the smallest. But he was perfectly aware that there was no decline in their admiration for him, and he accepted it carelessly.

The girls, on their part, felt something lacking in their present relations, — but what, they were not acute enough to discover. They accepted the change without resentment, and, had not Frank enlisted at the most opportune moment, he stood a fair chance of becoming that most odious of creatures, a woman-spoiled man.

Frank's taste in the matter of female character and deportment had been modified insensibly during his four years in college by association with the daughters of the professors, whom he met at "mite societies" and sophomore and senior class-parties. The contrast was to the immense advantage of the latter, but Frank was too kindly and loyal to his earlier friends to own it.

He had always heard Lucetta spoken of by the neighbors as "old for her age," without really knowing what they meant by the phrase. The girls had called her "uppety," which was clearer to him; but he good-naturedly defended her from that accusation, which could have hardly been made worse, for it included everything they resented, — lack of humility, lack of sociability, and too good an opinion of one's self to the unspoken disparagement of others.

Discriminating taste in the quality of woman's character is almost the last thing very young men acquire; some never do acquire it, and it was to Frank's credit he was so discerning in this case. He recognized in Lucetta a natural refinement and a delicacy which made it impossible to treat her with the rather bold freedom of manner he displayed toward the other girls in the neighborhood. He had been, hitherto, a sort of conquering hero to them, and that Lucetta should defy him, for some painful idea of duty, irritated and surprised him into a roughness toward her that made him first ashamed and then remorseful. If she had forgiven him at once, he would have forgotten expeditiously the offense and even the pardon! But when she would have nothing to say to him, and declined to listen to his speeches, his impetuous nature carried him to the other extreme, and he determined to force from her that clemency which had never been denied him before by her sex. Her cold repudiation of his efforts at reconciliation chafed and fretted him, and strengthened his determination that it should be accomplished. His father's acrid gibing kept him to his resolution, which otherwise would have surely flagged when new interests came up, incident to the arrest and imprisonment of the prime movers of the insurrection. He had given more earnest thought to Lucetta in these two weeks than to all the girls he had ever known, put together.

He was aware of her ardent ambition and stead-

fastness in following a course which had led her at last to the goal of her aspirations. He depreciated her tendency to strong-mindedness, as a very young man does in the case of young women who have not the patience to wait for him to pick and choose, before embracing ambitious projects.

Meantime he had determined to reënlist for a year, in accordance with the new call of the President. True to his Celtic blood, there was for him no keeping out of the fight as long as it raged. Now there was a fair prospect for promotion, and he hoped to become a lieutenant. He set Saturday to go to Crofton, where there was a recruiting officer, to carry out his purpose. Early that morning he stopped at the blacksmith's to have a bolt tightened in his buggy, which Zeke, who was with him, was to bring back home.

While Alec was busy with the job, he joined in the trifling gossip going on in the pauses of the game of quoits, the invariable amusement at the smithy.

"Going back to the army, are you, Frank?" asked the "hand," as he beat the sparks from a shoe he was shaping.

"Yes; I start as soon as Alec finishes this job."

"Should think you 'd had enough o' war! Three years is 'nuff for most folks."

"Well, to tell the truth, Alec, it unsettles a man, after he has once tasted the excitement of its risks and constant change. It 's life! This is stagnation!"

"No danger of you settlin' down on the farm with a nice, hard-workin' girl!" laughed Alec.

"None, that I see at present."

"You and Lucetty quittin' the neighborhood the same day seems kind o' queer!" observed Alec tentatively.

By this time, the whole neighborhood knew the smallest particulars of their affair.

"Is she going to-day?" he asked with surprise and interest.

"Yes; schoolma'am 's come to board with us this winter. She 's up to the house now, cryin' fit to kill."

"Lucy has n't gone already?"

"Yes, Uncle Laws Moore took her and her trunk in the little spring wagon at sun-up. He 's carrying some peaches to town, too. Like 's not he 'll get her left. Rock 's so turrible slow."

"Where 's she going?"

"She 'lows to go to Crofton, and take the stage for Waveland. She 's goin' to the Academy to learn to be a teacher."

"Miss Abbot 's at your house now, you say?

"Yes."

"Guess I 'll step up and see her. Hurry up that job, Alec!"

Frank started up the hill to the house, and Alec's meditative eye followed him as he quickly climbed it.

"'Pears like there *is* somethin' nearly as interestin' as war to that chap, after all. I heerd she

would n't speak to him after the rumpus! Lucetty 's gritty," and Alec laughed softly.

Frank reached the open door and found Miss Abbot just within the tidy sitting-room, swaying to and fro in the little rocking-chair, mournfully musing.

It was barely seven o'clock, but all the morning work was done, and Mrs. Rush was busy with her soap-boiling in the back yard.

"Good morning, Miss Abbot. Alec tells me Lucy 's gone. Is it true?" said Frank, rushing to the point with his usual impulsiveness.

Before answering, Miss Abbot wiped her eyes, which were deep pink around the lids.

"Yes, she went with Uncle Laws at half past five."

"She — she did n't leave any word for me, did she?" he asked hesitatingly. Frank had sent her a long letter two days before, informing her of his intention to reënlist, begging her forgiveness in view of the fact that they might never meet again, and had received no answer whatever; but he felt hopeful, for, this time, she had not returned it.

"No," said Miss Abbot with faint surprise.

"I might as well tell you, Miss Abbot, if Lucy has n't already," and he paused, — "she 's mad at me!" He said it so frankly, and was so openly troubled, Miss Abbot would have smiled had she not been so sorrowful herself.

"She told me nothing about it; she has never mentioned you to me."

Frank was a little mortified, but relieved too, and reflected that Lucetta had the rare virtue of keeping her affairs to herself.

"You say she went with Uncle Laws? At the rate old Rock travels, they must be almost to Chambers' Mill," said Frank reflectively.

The foundation of Rock's reputation was just the reverse of Flora Temple's, but in that vicinity his fame was wider spread.

"So Lucy is determined to be a teacher?" he said.

"Yes, and I know of no one who has as many of the qualities that go to make a good one," said the spinster. "So gentle, yet so firm, patient, and intelligent, and with such perseverance. She studied so faithfully and learned so quickly and thoroughly. She was a model daughter, and" — faltered Miss Abbot tearfully — "she was so kind to me! I don't know what I 'll do without her."

"I 'm afraid you 'll not find many friends here as congenial," said Frank warmly. "But I must go. I expect Alec 's got my buggy ready by this time. I 'm going to town myself, Miss Abbot. If I should overtake them, and it 's likely I will, have you any message for Lucy?"

Miss Abbot seemed to remember something, for she went to the bureau and took from the top of it a white envelope.

"Yes; tell her she left this," and Miss Abbot waved before Frank's mortified eyes his repentant letter.

"She could n't have read it, as it is n't opened," he thought.

"I 'll be sure to catch up with them. Give it to me, and I 'll deliver it to her," he said aloud.

He took it from Miss Abbot's hand, and, thrusting it into his breast pocket, went back to the shop, where he found the repairs finished. In a few moments he was whirling along the same road Lucetta had taken two hours before. It was the first week of September, and the air was full of that languorous heat which ripens the late fruit. The atmosphere was of the pale-yellow glow so characteristic of that month. It was what Alec in his utter satisfaction had called a "big yaller day." The tops of the distant trees that "kept company" with Honey Creek were swathed in pale-blue haze, which softened their jagged outlines into tenderest beauty. From the woods on either hand came the fragrance of ripe wild grapes and the unique odor of maturing pawpaws. Whiffs of pennyroyal were borne on dewy puffs of wind that stirred the beeches under which it grew. The birds were a-tune again after their August silence. The "bottoms" were gorgeous with the kingly color of iron-weed and the glowing yellow of goldenrod.

But Frank was not interested in anything nature had to exhibit that lovely morning. He drove rapidly in mortified silence, grunting by way of answer to the garrulous boy beside him. He kept his eyes on the sandy road ahead, and flicked the

lines on the back of his willing mare, urging her to greater speed. When he reached the top of the long steep hill where the track led down to the creek, he checked his horse to a walk. The road that descended the hill was an old Indian trail, and gradually "sidled," as cows do, instead of plunging straight down to the creek. For this reason the ford was hidden for the greater part of the descent, and it was not until Frank had nearly reached the bottom of the hill that a sight presented itself which caused him to splash quickly through the stream, and brought from him an exclamation: —

"Hello, Uncle Laws! In trouble?"

Uncle Laws was pounding with a stone on the tire of one of his front wheels, the pair of which spread out as if making ready to squat on the ground.

Lucetta had dismounted and stood near, anxiously watching the results of his labor. But the old man could do nothing with it; the antique vehicle was too frail to withstand the sturdy blows he dealt; and the wheel collapsed and left the wagon a-tilt on the other three, utterly useless for the time.

"Too bad, Uncle Laws! We 'll have to put a rail under it, and you can drag it back home," said Frank, who had alighted and was examining the wreck.

"Yes," quavered Uncle Laws. "I ain't a-carin' for me and the peaches, but Lucetty here wants to

ketch the stage for Waveland that goes out 'bout noon from Croftor."

Frank looked toward Lucetta, and said, after a little hesitation : —

"I can take Lucy on in my buggy, and maybe we can fasten the trunk on behind."

The trunk in question was a tiny old-fashioned one, covered with cowhide, on which the dark-red hair had been left, and was thickly studded with brass nails.

"I 'd go back with Uncle Laws if — How far are we from home?" Lucetta asked.

"About four miles," said Frank, so gravely that it led one to suspect he was making an effort to keep from laughing at Rock's gait.

"Yes, Lucetty," said the old man, "you jist git in with Frank. It 's too bad to disappoint you. It don't matter about me and the peaches."

"We can crowd the peaches in, too, Uncle Laws," said Frank kindly. "What do you want done with them?"

The old man explained, and Frank listened attentively, promising to fulfill his behests.

This kindliness was a new phase of Frank's character to Lucetta. Though unwillingly, she could not but admire it, and this, together with her urgent wish to catch the stage, overcame her obduracy, and induced her to accept a seat in Frank's buggy. He was perfectly aware of her reluctance, but ignored it, satisfied that she did accept it on any terms. It seemed a step toward reconciliation.

They crowded the bag of peaches under the seat, and strapped the little trunk on behind with one of Uncle Laws's lines. After Frank had helped the old man, and had seen him and Zeke safely up the hill, they, too, set off.

At first there was silence between them, but a man as impulsive as Frank could not keep his tongue still very long.

"Bad for Uncle Laws, but lucky for me," he observed, with an attempt at jocularity which was belied by his evident nervousness.

Lucetta made no reply.

"Lucky for you too, Lucy, only you won't acknowledge it. You 'd have caught the stage about three o'clock at the speed old Rock was making."

Unwillingly Lucetta smiled faintly, but it was a breaking up of the stern gravity of her face and emboldened Frank.

"Look here, Lucy! You might forgive me. I've done everything a fellow can do in the way of apology. You know I 'm sorry."

"You know you are not," she replied, with a burst of rash heat. "You know you 'd do it again, if you had the chance."

A grievance aired, like some chemicals at the first exposure to the atmosphere, boils over before it can reach a pacific state. The situation between Frank and Lucetta was such as to induce an explosion at the first reopening of the dispute between them. However, anything, in Frank's opinion, was better than deadly passivity: given the opportunity of speech, he could defend himself.

"Well," he said, "it was a soldier's duty to carry out orders, if possible; as such I was bound in honor to do it first of all. I 'm sorry to have offended you, Lucy, but it had to be done, because it was the right thing to do," said Frank resolutely. "The only thing I am sorry for is to have made you mad at me."

"And you forgot me and left me shut up twenty-four hours — a thing you would not have done to the meanest rebel prisoner. You did not think enough of me even to ask if I 'd starved to death," she said coldly, nullifying his plea.

"Well, I know I did," he acknowledged sturdily, "but you know I had some excuse for it. I had the confidence of men high in authority that I could not violate, and, more, the honor of the State was at stake. If it had been my own mother — and even you can't say I don't care for her — it would have been the same, — duty first."

They were both silent while the horse climbed the hill, and on the level at the top Frank said, earnestly and diffidently: —

"But you 've had your revenge. You ought to be satisfied. There has hardly been an hour since that I have not thought of you. You know how I tried to see you, and how you 've treated me. To paraphrase your own words, you would n't have treated the meanest Copperhead so. Sent my letters back unread. Why did n't you read the last one, when you kept it?" looking at her keenly.

He was rewarded by seeing her start slightly, and a flitting of red stain the pale cheek next him.

"We are more than even, Lucy. You know you are unjust. Even these Copperhead knights will be given a hearing, a thing you are not fair enough to grant me," he pleaded artfully, appealing, as he well knew, to one of her strongest characteristics, an unfaltering sense of justice.

"I did not mean to be unfair to you, Frank. But it hurt me so, the contempt, the anger, and all you did to me."

Frank made no reply to her accusation, but asked: —

"Will you read my letter now?"

"How can I?"

He drew it from his pocket, crumpled with his hasty thrust, and laid it on her lap with the address uppermost.

She looked at him in startled surprise. "How did you get it?" she stammered.

"Read it first," he demanded stubbornly; "then I'll tell you."

She seemed no longer able to resist his will, which was like iron under his seemingly light, careless exterior, and she tore the letter open and read it. It was a manly, straightforward appeal for forgiveness, and a warm plea for a renewal of her friendship, and it expressed his conviction of his duty as a citizen and a soldier. "You women forget," he concluded, "that, while we fight, you stand in the most sacred lodgment of our hearts. It is for you, after all, that men accomplish anything that is worthy; put forth their best efforts

for your approval; risk their lives in great causes to save their homes where you abide; without you there would be no high endeavor. Life with only men in it would soon be a struggle for brute supremacy. Few men love each other; they like, they admire, they respect, if you will, but rarely love. You are the only things in creation they really love. And if, under great stress, their coarser nature rises uppermost — where the softer is impotent, useless, — and they fail in minor matters toward you, your finer ones should be patient and forgive."

Lucetta felt like a "damsel possessed of divination" that had found the purest spring of his nature. It was so unlike what she had expected from the gay, reckless, boyish Frank, she could make no comment on it, and tears came to her eyes so she dared not raise them.

"Now tell me why you would n't read it," insisted Frank.

"I was afraid to, Frank," she said, so faintly he could hardly hear her.

"Afraid?" he said, amazed. "Why?"

She could not dissemble, and said in almost a whisper: —

"Because I was afraid I *would* forgive, to my shame. It was too easy."

"What a strange reason!"

His blood leaped faster when he realized what such a speech might imply. A girl of less integrity would never have made the admission, but from one less conscientious it would never have moved

him. He would have passed it by as a speech of little import.

"Is there another reason?" he insisted, his face flushing with ardor.

She raised her startled eyes to his face, and they mutely implored him not to be cruel and force from her a revelation that to her seemed shameful.

But at that look the tide of passion rose in him which broke through all barriers of maidenly reserve. He must know! She must tell! The horse was walking sedately. He dropped the lines to the dashboard, and roughly pushed his arm about her.

"Tell me, is n't there? Tell me! tell me!"

"I never will!" she said desperately, virgin shame making her as cold as ice.

He tightened his grasp about her, and, throwing his other arm over her shoulder, held her in a close embrace, while he took by storm what he had not the patience to gain by slow advances, — the first kiss of passion ever snatched from Lucetta's lips; and he left her wounded like a doe from a death-bolt. Such utter shame was never felt since the First Mother felt it, as an emotion unknown to her, at creation: the poignancy, the humiliation of it only her daughters can know; it is the inheritance of the chaste. She sighed a heart-broken sigh in his rough embrace, and her eyes were full of anguish, which Frank read aright as soon as he recovered his senses. He gathered up his lines again with one hand, but still kept the other about Lu-

cetta's shrinking body. He felt her tremble, but waited in silence for her to become a little accustomed to the situation before he spoke. It was not an unusual position for his free arm when riding with any of the girls he took driving in his new buggy on Sunday afternoons. He felt contrition now that it had ever enfolded another woman.

"You do not respect me, Frank," she faltered at last, "or you would not treat me so!"

"Of course not!" said he, with assumed levity, "I never thought of such a thing! For you see, Lucy, I love you so much that it means all that a man can feel for his sweetheart!"

He leaned down and looked into her agitated face, but her eyes avoided his.

"I surrender, Lucy! I 'm as much your prisoner as you were mine!" he laughed, and said provokingly, "but I 'll be sworn you will not forget me! Is n't it so? Own up, Lucy, and we 'll sign a truce to last through life!"

"Frank," she said agitatedly, — "you never thought of this when you set out this morning!"

With any other girl he might have made a denial, but Lucetta's absolute honesty made him honest, and he answered cheerfully, —

"Why, of course not! Neither did you, I reckon!"

The beguilement of this speech made her set face slacken to a slight smile.

"That 's right, Lucy; now we can talk things over."

He felt her rigid body relax within his encircling arm, and he smiled in her face with triumphant fervor as he drew her closer to his side.

The rest of the way, on the lonely unfrequented road, they talked as lovers do, and planned for that future which, for the gallant soldier, might never be.

Frank fully approved Lucetta's plan of educating herself, for he had learned among other things at Wahoo University that, while women's minds might not be quite equal to the curriculum for men, the ancient and time-honored theory that they ceased to develop after eighteen was a fallacy, like curing witchcraft by burning the witch, or the king's evil by touching the king. He was wise enough to recognize that an educated wife would better fit into his ambitious schemes for the future than an ignorant one, while, to do him justice, he was proud of the pluck and perseverance that had led Lucetta to the realization of her dreams. He told her that after the war he should study law, and his aspirations were such as to carry him into the halls of national legislation. But if he gave up his life in battle he would have done his duty, and that was all a man could do.

His hopes and fears he unreservedly poured into her willing ears, and only too speedily the spires of Crofton came into view from the top of the last hill above the town.

"Lucy," he said, "little did I think this morning that I 'd be nearly the happiest man in Middle

County. I did not dream of going off to war and leaving the dearest, noblest sweetheart a soldier ever left behind. I 'll never laugh again at the fellows that used to steal away and hide to read certain letters the rest of us used to joke so irreverently about, for I 'll know how to sympathize when I get yours. One thing more would make me the very happiest man alive."

"What is it, Frank?" she asked ingenuously, and, looking up into his ardent eyes, she read his desire therein.

"Oh, I can't, Frank!" she faltered, and shrank from him.

"Can't you give me one kiss of your own accord? It will be the last good-by, dear, that we take here, for you know you would n't like public demonstrations. Just kiss me once!" he pleaded.

She looked up, quickly dropped on his lips the first kiss she had ever bestowed on a lover, then buried her face on his breast, trembling and crying.

He dimly wondered why this most chaste of women had been reserved for him, whose lips had hitherto showered kisses with careless prodigality; it was like asking a Vestal to quit her high office; the young soldier felt it, and knew Lucetta could never have bestowed that kiss without her faithful love.

"God bless you, dear, and make me worthier of you!" he said fervently.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TREASON TRIAL

After the soldiers had withdrawn from the mimic battlefield at Ridgely, comparatively little punishment followed on this act of insurrection. The governor's leniency in this particular was a matter of surprise to every one, and to none more so than to the Knights themselves. With rare wisdom, he made no autocratic display of power at a time when it would have been most hazardous to do so. Such a course would certainly have firmly united the scattered forces of "Butternuts," and led to a more effective organization. He placed the responsibility on the leaders. One by one they were apprehended, until Milligan, Bowles, Dodd, Heffren, and Coultiss were imprisoned. Such men as Harv Wilson were held in the jails of the county seats in which they lived, and were ultimately released on bail. The rank and file were left to the torment of their own fears, dreading yet expecting hourly arrest, followed by worse punishment, regarding which their untutored imaginations ran to extremes, and they were in an agony of suspense. The more cowardly members ran away from the State; others were in hiding

in caves and secret places in the ravine near their homes.

The preparation for the uprising of August 16th had been simultaneous in all the Temples throughout the State. But Governor Morton was fully informed, and prepared at every point. When well convinced that an insurrection was imminent, with matchless forbearance he ordered written notices sent to the leaders that, if they were found en route to Indianapolis on August 15th and 16th, they would be held personally responsible for resulting disorders.

The leaders, fully convinced of the futility of insurrection, sent cipher messages far and near to the commanders of the County Temples, who, in turn, were to notify the Branch Temples of the discovery of their plans, and the danger of persisting in attempting to carry them out. The small outposts remote from telegraphic communication, that received mail only two or three times a week, were informed by couriers, and the message chosen was the one Frank Neal had intercepted on its way to Harv Wilson, "Look out for a drove of mules;" for, to meet any emergency, troops had been ordered into the localities where greater disorder was anticipated, — those well-known strongholds of treason on which the governor had kept a vigilant eye, in the midst of terrible harassment.

Three expeditions in wagons actually succeeded in reaching the city limits of the capital, but were met by officers and ordered to return home, or be

taken prisoners to be treated as enemies; and they promptly retreated, nor stood upon the order of their going.

If lenient toward the masses, Governor Morton was swift to punish the leaders.

It was a solemn hour when, for the first time in her history, the Commonwealth arraigned six of her citizens for the monstrous crime of internecine treason. These six, in their own persons, stood for some thousands whom they had instigated to treasonable acts.

On that morning in September when the commission first met, the dingy old state-house was the centre of interest to the entire State, indeed to the nation. Within the court-room a crowd had gathered. The seven commissioners and the judge advocate were in their places, and before them, on trial for life, were to be brought the heads of the conspiracy. The usual preliminaries were gone through, and, when the actual trial began, interest and suspense had reached painful intensity.

Dodd was the first of the conspirators called to trial. His air of supreme fanaticism still hung about him. He seemed incapable of realizing his position, and sat unmoved on the witness-stand, with eyes filled with burning ardor, and a visible exaltation of countenance. Lingering on the edge of the crowd were Harv Wilson, who was out on bail, and had come secretly to the trial, and some of his confrères. There is a majesty in the law and its slow execution that makes itself felt by a

mere display of its machinery, stately, relentless, cold, and incorruptible. Brought face to face with it in issues that involve life and death, these offenders recognized its immense potency with fear and trembling. For the first time, they felt actual terror of the power of the law and its executive.

A deep silence prevailed in the court room as the bailiff brought forward the first witness for the State. The rustling of law papers could be distinctly heard. Even Dodd was impressed, and cast down his eyes, while through his fanatical mind flashed forebodings of mortal peril. An absolute hush followed. When the oath was administered to the witness, and his soft Southern voice answered distinctly and reverently, there was a straining of eyes and a rising on tiptoe to see him. Dodd lifted a startled glance to the face of the witness, and gazed bewildered on the man who held his every secret, and, as the thought penetrated his confused senses that this man held his life in his power, that he was his familiar adviser, his coadjutor in the most outrageous schemes of treason, and held in his grasp every thread of the conspiracy, he was unmanned.

He blinked as one does on coming from grateful darkness into painful light, scarcely believing in the evidence of his own eyes. He looked again. There was no mistaking the tall, slender fellow, the red-blonde hair, the marked accent, the ready speech, of his ally the "Secretary of the Grand Council of the State of Kentucky." At that in-

stant Dodd lost all hope of escape from the doom of a traitor. His gaze traveled over the cold composed faces of the commission, then turned to the people, who were agape with curiosity, and who had no knowledge of the tragic drama played by the two actors before them. But there was nothing to cheer him in the aroused faces of the multitude.

As Grundy with terrible accuracy laid bare the facts of the conspiracy, from the stupendous schemes of Vallandigham to the meetings in the cabin on Harv Wilson's farm, the evidence became more damning, and the ghastly phantom of death more real to the man who listened while the smooth stream of revelation poured upon the ears of the astounded people.

After one amazed glance, Harv, who had risen to stare over the heads of those in front of him, sank down to his place panic-stricken, and cursed under his breath, when he recognized in the witness the rag-peddler, Oliver Tapp. He muttered savagely, "The old hell-witch was right after all!" and lost no time in leaving the court room.

He crossed the canal, where he and two or three confederates had mean lodgings, and reported to them the terrifying incident that gave so dramatic a turn to the trial, and then unfolded his own plans. One of these men, Lattam, had been a rebel officer and was bold and defiant; Pearson, the other, had been on the staff of the Supreme Commander, but neither was well known in Indianapolis.

Zerfus had followed Harv up from the country with the servility of a serf.

"It 's all up with us," said Harv, "if we 're caught! That fellow knows everything. The best thing we can do is to light out for Canada this very night."

Zerfus, of course, agreed with Harv, but Lattam and Pearson were experienced in intrigue, had a reckless love of adventure, and were incautious to a point where life had no value. They both repudiated the idea.

"And leave these men without help?"

"It 's likely they can get out of a military prison guarded day and night, ain't it?" sneered Harv.

"When they have friends outside, they 've been known to do it; that is, friends that are n't afraid to risk something," said Pearson scornfully.

Harv was tasting the humiliation of a craven, for his companions had discerned his utter selfishness. They suspected, if an emergency should arise, that to save himself he would turn informer.

They said nothing more, however, and a week passed. During that time Grundy had related, bit by bit, with wonderful accuracy, the details of the wildest scheme of modern history, — a widespread, ill-planned attempt at revolution not unfitting the invention of a knight of old who broke lances against harmless windmills; and he proved himself the most patriotic, reliable, acute, and courageous man in the employ of the government, and,

moreover, conscientiously earnest in breaking up internecine treason, from which he himself had suffered greatly. His knowledge of the part each of the six heads of the conspiracy had taken was perfect and convincing, and fell on their ears with the fatal finality of the cry of the doomsman.

During this interval Harv's associates came in, and Pearson said to him: —

"Well, Wilson, we 've found a way to be of use to our Grand Commander. Will you help?"

Harv gave a grudging assent and said: —

"But I 'd like to know your plans."

"Well, we went to Dodd's brother," said Lattam, "and told him to use his influence with the authorities to get him removed from the military prison to better quarters, and the fools did it!" All three laughed derisively.

"You ain't jokin'?" exclaimed Harv incredulously.

"No. Dodd 's now in a room in the third story of the Post-office Building."

"It beats me how he managed it," observed Harv.

"Well, he gave his parole of honor he would n't try to escape, and his brother pledged all he was worth to the same end, and that clinched it. Moved he was."

"Precious fools they were," said Lattam contemptuously.

"Well, I don't see that it 's any easier to get him out there. I reckon he 's guarded."

"There 's not a guard outside," said Pearson slowly, as if to impress his hearers with the egregious folly of the authorities. "They depend on the police."

"Well, I don't see how he can get out of the third story anyway; he ain't got wings," Harv said doggedly.

"No, but he 's got a ball of twine," laughed Lattam, "which won't be so awkward for him to handle."

"Sometimes they come in handy. Go on and tell me your plan. I see you 've got one, though I 'm blamed if I see how you 'll work it," said Harv skeptically.

"Well, this afternoon three of his dear friends got permission to visit him; I was one of them. We were n't allowed to stay long. When we went away we left behind a ball of twine, and I had previously prepared a little note telling him to look carefully for it after we were gone, and detailing the whole plan of escape. I shook hands last with him, and left the note in his hand."

"What 's the next step in the game?" asked Harv, more interested and hopeful.

He recognized in Lattam a fellow of greater craft and sterner resolution than himself; a leader by right of ability to prevail in the face of desperate obstacles; his spirit, broken by failure, yielded him fealty.

"My plan is simple and easy enough. To-morrow morning about three o'clock we will try to get

a rope to him. At our signal he will let down the twine, and when the road is clear he can escape down the rope. Pearson will watch at the alley for the policeman to pass on his beat, and will then turn out the gas that lights it. These October mornings are as black as hell, and the alley will be as dark as a coal shaft. If he can get down the rope the rest is easy."

"A good plan, if you can work it," observed Harv dubiously.

"We 'll work it all right, only Platt 's got drunk and jailed, and we have n't any trusted man to be ready with the carriage."

Harv saw what was expected of him, and resented the implication conveyed by Lattam in not asking him boldly.

To right himself in their esteem, he covered up his chagrin and said heartily: —

"I 'm your man!"

"All right," said Lattam, so cordially that Harv felt he was in favor again.

At the appointed hour these three men, Lattam, Pearson, and Wilson, grown subtile in conspiracy, were at their posts. And the next morning the city rang with the escape of the prisoner, Dodd.

Harv secretly returned home, a defeated and crestfallen man, whose influence in the neighborhood was dead. Bold villany can be forgiven, but not weak failure, and Harv tasted to the full the ignominy of deposed leadership.

The flight of Dodd had the effect of making the

surveillance over the other prisoners more constant, and perhaps influenced the severity of their sentence, which was death.

At Ridgely, reports of the trial were received with eager concern, the testimony of Tapp and Frank Neal being of special interest. The revelation of Tapp's identity was received with amazement. Every peculiarity of the man was canvassed, every speech recalled with that minute attention to details the most trifling peculiar to country neighborhoods. In the mean time he was exalted to heroship with Frank. But there was consternation when a rumor reached there that Bowles and Milligan were writing confessions, and implicating men whose names hitherto had been unmentioned, or who had escaped with slight punishment, and there was an exodus to Canada that bade fair to depopulate the county. Harv Wilson was one of the first to flee; but old Mrs. Bowles stood her ground — defying everybody, from the governor down to the constable.

Later on, when they heard of the assassination of Lincoln, — grown pure and exalted by high and noble purposes until fitted for the martyrdom he met, — there came to them the realization of the true meaning of domestic treason, and the influence of the order was broken. To this day, there are no claimants in Middle County to the spurs of the Knights in Fustian.

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